

COMPUTER SHOPPER[®]

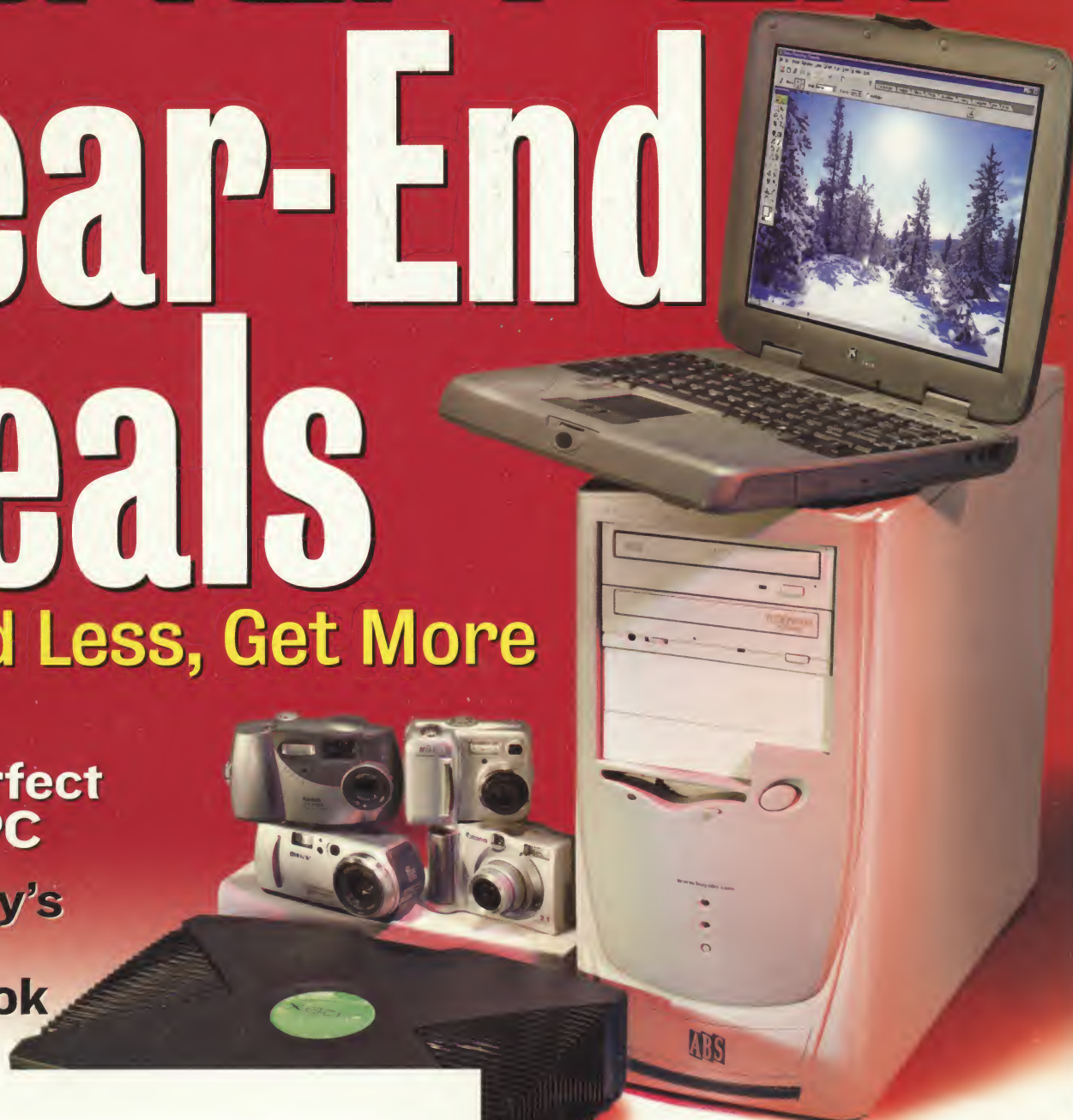
December
2001

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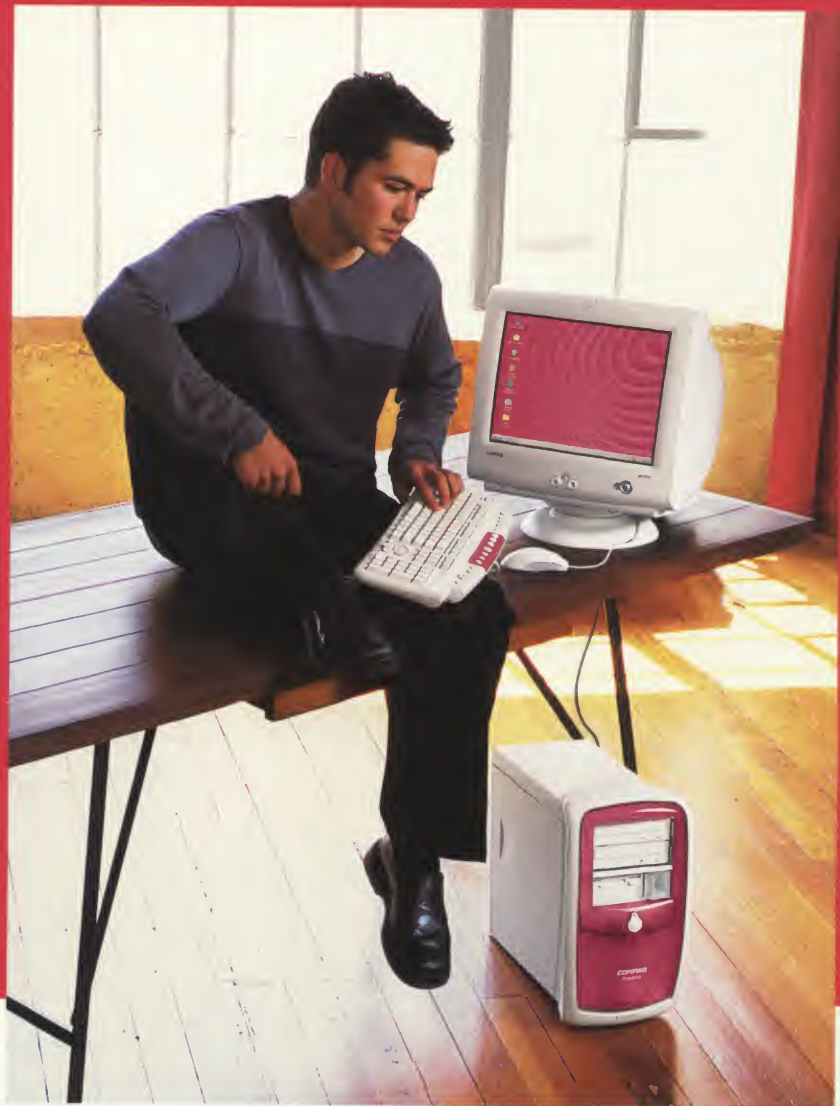
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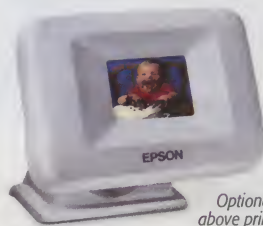
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welcome new users



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ABS Performance 5 • Dell Dimension 4300 (beta)
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DIGITAL CAMERAS *by Aimee Baldrige, Christy Balich, Jay Munro, Kymerly Orcholski, and Becky Waring*

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If you've got pictures to organize—digital or paper—the Web can help. Take a look at digital photo sites that let you process film, create prints, organize albums, archive your images, and create gifts.



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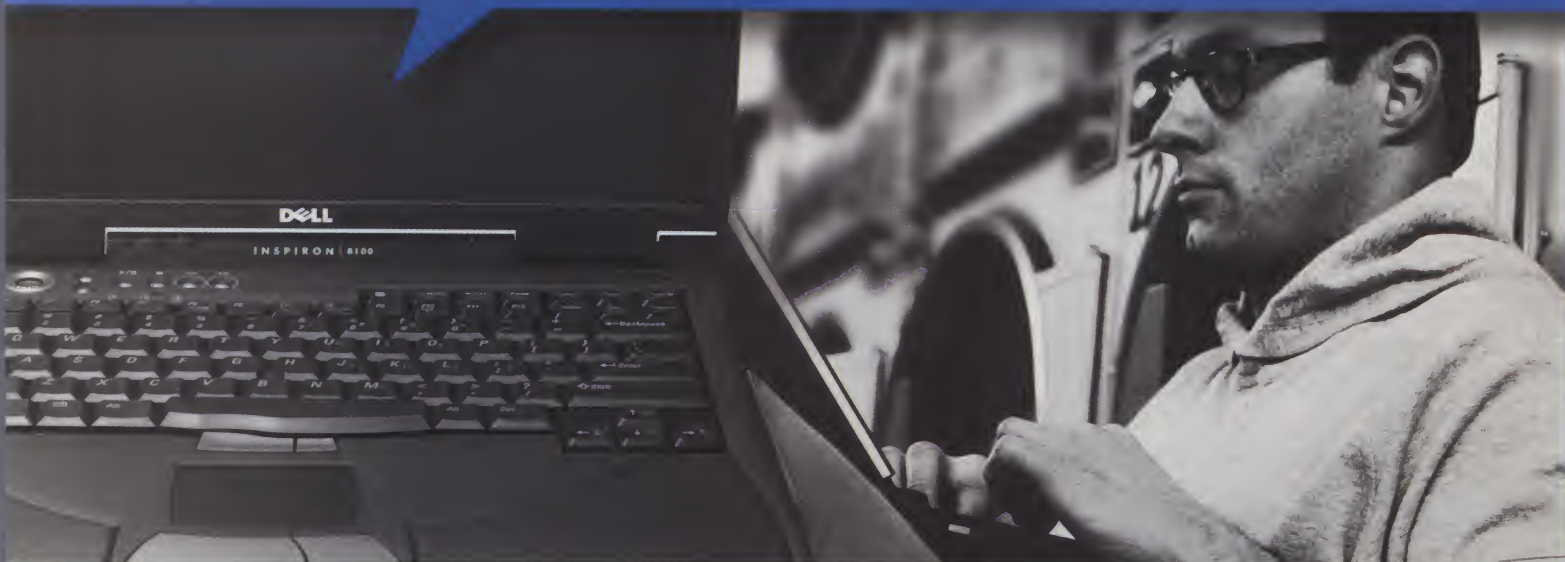
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JANICE CHEN



Smart Synergies

Not everyone is ready to call it a recession, but by all accounts we're clearly experiencing an "economic downturn." So now that we're in the midst of what is traditionally the busiest tech-buying season of the year, it's more important than ever to make smart purchasing decisions.

To get the most for your tech dollar, you need accurate, unbiased advice that helps you zero in on the best products and services for your specific needs. At *Computer Shopper*, we are better positioned than ever to deliver just that. Regular readers already know that we've leveraged our relationship with ZDNet to guide you through the wealth of information available online. Starting this month, we're joining forces with CNET.com to bring you even more options to get the smartest buying advice in the industry.

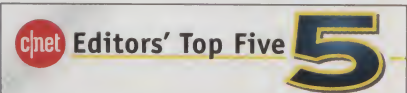
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In addition, *Computer Shopper* editors work closely with their colleagues at CNET.com to produce more than 30 product reviews in each issue of the magazine, culling reviews from the more than 100 new

products that undergo hands-on testing in CNET Labs every month.

Another joint effort with CNET.com is our Top Five lists (see p. 44), which debut this month and offer a snapshot of the finest products we've seen in several categories.



These winning desktops, notebooks, handhelds, inkjets, and productivity suites are the best you

can buy—for now. To keep you current, we'll update the lists each month to cover a variety of product categories; for more Top Fives and full reviews of all the winners, go to top5.cnet.com.

The Top Fives are only the beginning of the great deals and products you'll find reviewed in this issue. For holiday-shopping tips, don't miss our two hardware roundups.

First, on p. 102, we review five desktops geared up for home entertainment. Packed with big 19-inch monitors, home-theater-worthy sound systems, and DVD and CD-RW drives, these home PCs sell for less than \$1,600. And our digital camera shoot-out on p. 114 is a must-read for anyone in the market for a new digicam. We tested five 2-megapixel models that offer point-and-shoot simplicity for about \$400 or less. For those who need higher resolutions—and have a higher spending cap—we also include a look at six more advanced alternatives.



Digital-photography buffs will also want to check out our feature story "Photo Finishers" on p. 142, as well as this month's Tune-Up article, "Images in a Flash," on p. 200. "Photo Finishers" examines 10 online photo sites that let you create prints, organize albums, archive images, make gifts, and more. "Images in a Flash" takes you step-by-step through how to transfer, touch up, crop, size, and share your digital photos.

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PC World Best Buy, October 2001
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1QuantISpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.80GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.533GHz.
2QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.70GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.47GHz.

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+¹ **\$1229** # 3827

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1700+² **\$1199** # 3826

1QuantISpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.70GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.47GHz.
2QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.60GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.40GHz.

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1600+¹ **\$799** # 3836

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1500+² **\$779** # 3835

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Smart Computing Best Buy, August 2001

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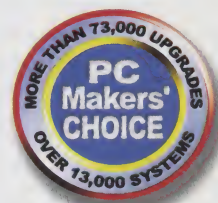
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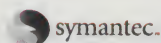
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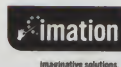
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TRENDS

Revenge of the RIAA: Dupe-Proof Audio CDs

If you thought that shutting down Napster was the record industry's last word on piracy, think again. The major labels are now devising ways to produce unrippable CDs that can't be transferred to an MP3 player or recorded to a hard drive or CD-R.

The idea has been tried before, but this time the record companies are serious. Secure CDs are already a fait accompli in Europe, where more than 1 million discs have shipped with Midbar Tech's *Cactus Data Shield* copy-protection technology.

Following Midbar's lead in this country is a joint venture between veteran security companies TTR Technologies (www.ttr.co.il) and Macrovision (www.macrovision.com).

According to Brian McPhail, vice president of Macrovision's consumer software division, the company's new SafeAudio technology allows discs to be played in audio-CD, CD-ROM, and



DVD-ROM drives, but makes it impossible to rip usable tracks to a hard drive or CD-R. Industry insiders report that more than 200,000 SafeAudio-encoded discs have already been distributed, and by the end of next year, as many as 90 percent of all new releases could be protected.

Macrovision claims the system is undetectable and unbreakable, but the company couldn't supply test samples that would let us determine this for ourselves. Furthermore, the cracker underground maintains that its existing ripper applications can copy SafeAudio discs

and rip protected tracks. Even if they can't, SafeAudio stops working once content enters the analog domain, allowing discs to be copied by connect-

ing the analog output of an audio-CD player to the line-in jack on a PC.

None of this means that SafeAudio is a failure. The major labels are gambling that most consumers won't want to go to the trouble of circumventing the system. In the high-stakes world of antipiracy initiatives, even a partial win counts as a success.

—Don Labriola

For AMD, XP Is 'Extra Performance'

What's in a name? In the case of AMD's new processors, shrewd marketing.

In October the chipmaker unveiled the Athlon XP line of processors, which run at clock speeds of 1.2GHz to 1.5GHz and are intended to compete with Intel's Pentium 4. Though the XP suffix has no official tie-in with Windows XP (the AMD abbreviation reportedly stands for "extra performance"; Microsoft's, for "experience"), AMD's choice of moniker hardly seems coincidental. The new Athlon "has the extra performance essential to the ultimate Windows XP computing experience," according

to AMD.

With the Athlon XP, AMD hopes to dispel the "megahertz myth" that higher clock speeds automatically translate into faster performance. The company claims that, despite its lower frequency, the 1.5GHz Athlon XP 1800+ offers application performance that's at least on a par with a 1.8GHz



AMD Athlon XP processor

Pentium 4. But in marketing the new chip, AMD will avoid direct comparisons to Intel's products and make no references to clock speeds.

This isn't the first attempt to challenge Intel's marketing methods. In 1995 AMD joined with Cyrix in establishing the P rating in an effort to shift consumer focus away from megahertz. Although 133MHz Cyrix 6x86 chips were proven to outperform 166MHz Pentiums, the P rating failed to catch on.

Time will tell if the Athlon XP can ride Windows XP's coattails to success.

—Rick Broida

Where the Sales Are

PC sales may be sluggish, but according to consulting firm NPD Intellect, there has been "robust growth" in certain computer product categories, notably memory, monitors, and CD media.

Category	2000 Percent Dollar Share*	2001 Percent Dollar Share*	Year-Over-Year Percent Revenue Growth
Removable Memory	0.3	0.8	210.7
LCD Monitors	0.3	0.7	149.5
Blank-CD Media	1.7	2.7	65.4
PDA's	2.4	3.7	57.3
Printing Consumables	22.9	29.1	31.9
Recordable CD Drives	2.2	2.8	30.4

* Dollar share of total computer products sold

Source: NPD Intellect, 2001

to AMD marketing materials.

"Windows XP is going to be a fairly important phenomenon," says Nathan Brookwood, principal analyst at Insight 64, a technology marketing firm. "Anybody who can attach a product to the XP aura



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TRENDS

Amazon Adds PCs to Inventory

It may seem like a bad time to open an online computer store, but in August **Amazon.com** (www.amazon.com/computers) did just that.

Richard Chin, general manager of the new store, says the demand was there. Peripherals are hot sellers on Amazon.com, and the site reached \$100 million in electronics sales in just seven months, compared with 27 months for books, he says.

"This is definitely a tough time, but [we have] reason to be optimistic," says Chin. In a recent survey, two-thirds of Amazon's customers said they plan to buy their next computer online, and Chin says Amazon

will be "a natural destination."

PCs are still selling, though not at the heady rates of the 1990s. Research firm IDC expects U.S. PC shipments to be down 6.3 percent in 2001, but sees sales up 4.6 percent in 2002 and 14.2 percent in 2003. Many of those sales will be made online: Both IDC and Forrester Research predict 40 percent of hardware sales will be transacted via the Web by 2004.

"We believe that the long-term online opportunity is attractive, since PCs are the third largest category of online

sales, after travel and apparel," says Jamie Kiggen, an analyst with Credit Suisse First Boston.

Ingram Micro (www.ingrammicro.com) will handle inventory and distribution, which takes a lot of risk out of the equation for Amazon.

The store will also sell used computers through third-party suppliers that include **TechSmart** (www.techsmart.com).

In an attempt to simplify the buying process, Amazon provides side-by-side comparisons for both desktops and notebooks. The site also offers features such as the Buying Advisor, which makes recommendations based on how a PC will be used, and the Configurator, which makes suggestions

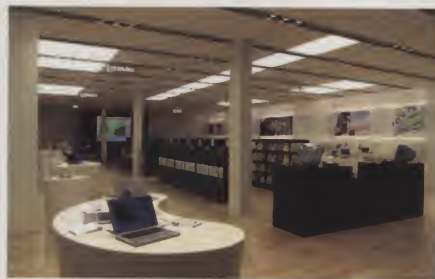
based on operating system, price, brand, memory, and hard drive space. Currently, Amazon's buying tools can only be used for new systems, but Chin says the company plans to extend the advisors to the used section.

—Elaine X. Grant



Apple's Mall Madness

Apple Computer (www.apple.com) raised eyebrows when it started opening retail stores in upscale suburban malls—especially considering that **Gateway** (www.gateway.com) closed dozens of its Gateway Country stores this year, and the personal computer market has been sickly for most of 2001. Nonetheless, Apple wants to open a total of 25 stores by the end of the year. Has Apple chief executive Steve



Apple goes retail.

Jobs finally lost it?

No, and neither has Gateway. Gateway did close some of its approximately 300 stores, but it isn't fleeing retail. It has also opened 11 new ones and plans

to launch more.

"We're making stores the center point of everything we do at Gateway," says Judy Quye, vice president of Gateway Country stores.

No one denies that the current hardware market has been punishing for computer sellers. The recent economic downturn may make 2001 seem like a bad time to spend money on real estate, but Apple doesn't see it that way. It's signing 10- to 12-

year leases on the assumption that today's soft economy won't matter in the long term. Gateway doesn't divulge real-estate details, but its leases are presumably similar.

There's one key difference between the two companies' retail strategies, however. Gateway sees its stores as inventory-free community centers, blending product demos with Internet-safety lectures and computer merit-badge clinics for Boy Scouts.

Apple stores feature similar demonstrations and face-to-face programs, but customers can take a Mac home. "I believe retailing is hard if you get someone into your store and they can't walk out with anything," says Stephen Baker, an analyst at NPD Intellect. He also says Apple products get lost in a sea of Windows machines at standard retail stores.

Both Gateway and Apple could use their stores to lure first-time customers who would never order online or through a catalog. So cancel Jobs's straitjacket—at least for now.

—Jen Muehlbauer

Think Ink for Profits

Gillette proved it can reap profits by marking up razor blades after practically giving away razors. Inkjet printer manufacturers apparently have paid close attention and adopted a similar business model.

Research firm I.T. Strategies estimates that total revenue for inkjet hardware and consumables for 2000 was \$27 billion. Of that amount, ink comprised the largest segment, with revenue of \$12.5 billion. The company estimates that even if no new printers were ever sold, users would continue to consume \$25 billion worth of ink and media each year for several years.



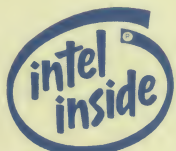
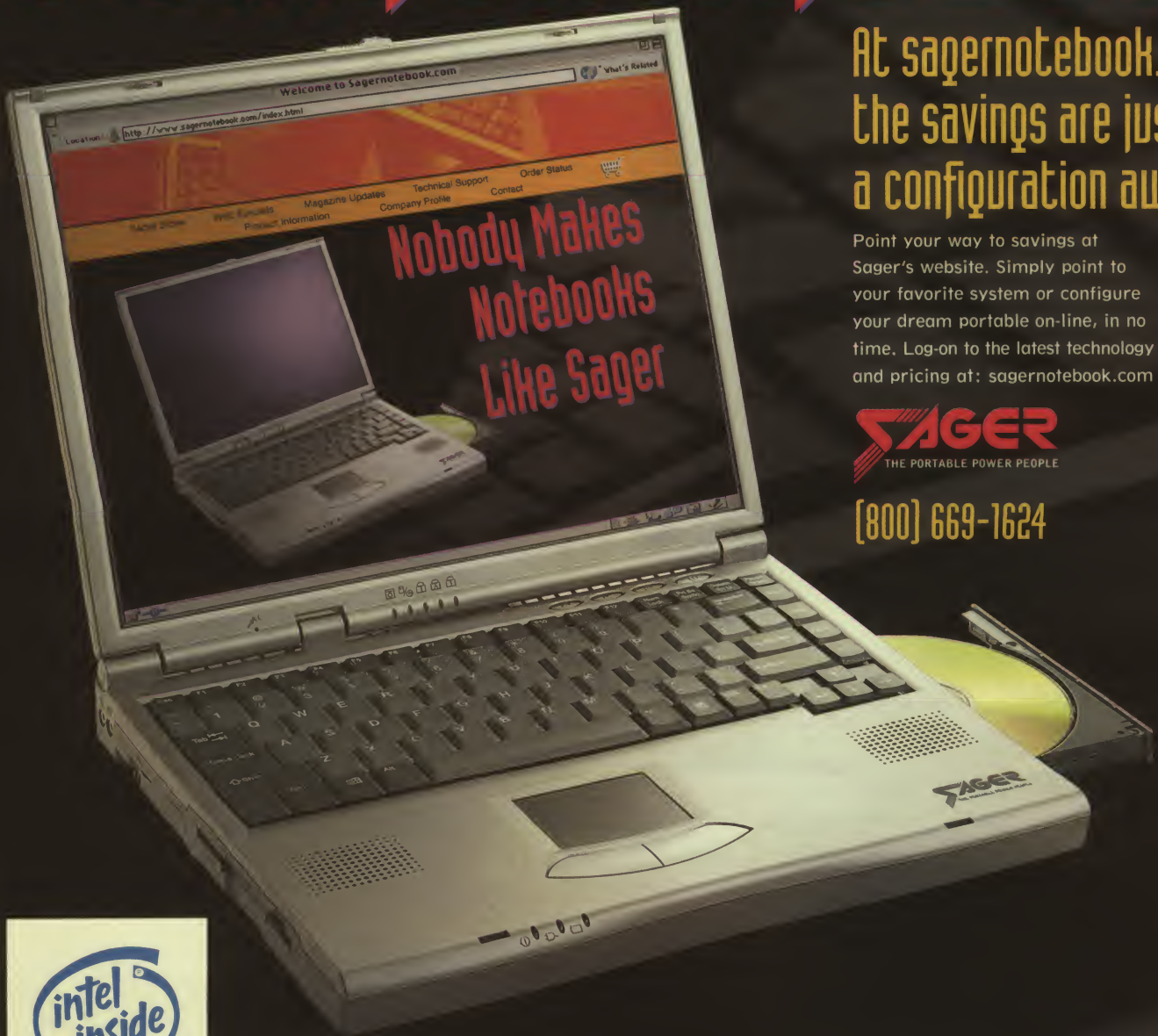
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As if all these features weren't enough, Sager's NP4250 series also includes multiple colored or clear palm rests to fit your mood—which will always be good considering all these features!

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- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
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- 14.0" w x 11.0" d x 2.2" h
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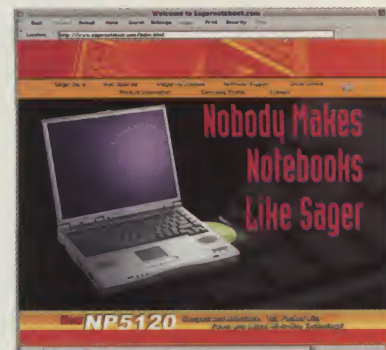
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- Integrated 56K V90 Modem* + 10/100 Ethernet
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- 102-Key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- IEEE-1394 Port
- 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with opt. Iomega® Zip Drive or 2nd HDD
- 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
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- 4X ATI M6-P Mobile Radeon 3D Accelerator
- 512MB 133MHz SDRAM
- 30.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 6X DVD/4X4X20 CD-RW¹ Combo Drive
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- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
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- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE-1394 Port & 1 TV-Out Port
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- Other Ports: 4USB, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
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- Weight: 7.7 lbs with Battery
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- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- 3D Surround Sound
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE-1394 Port & 1 TV-Out Port
- 1 Sony® Standard Memory Stick & 1 Panasonic® SD Memory
- Other Ports: 4USB, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- 2 Interchangeable Color Palm Rest Covers
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- Weight: 7.7 lbs with Battery
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- 256MB 133MHz SDRAM
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- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- 3D Surround Sound
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
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- 1 Sony® Standard Memory Stick & 1 Panasonic® SD Memory
- Other Ports: 4USB, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
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- 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE-1394 Port
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
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- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive²
- Integrated 56K V90 Modem¹ + 10/100 Ethernet
- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and API
- 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE-1394 Port
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
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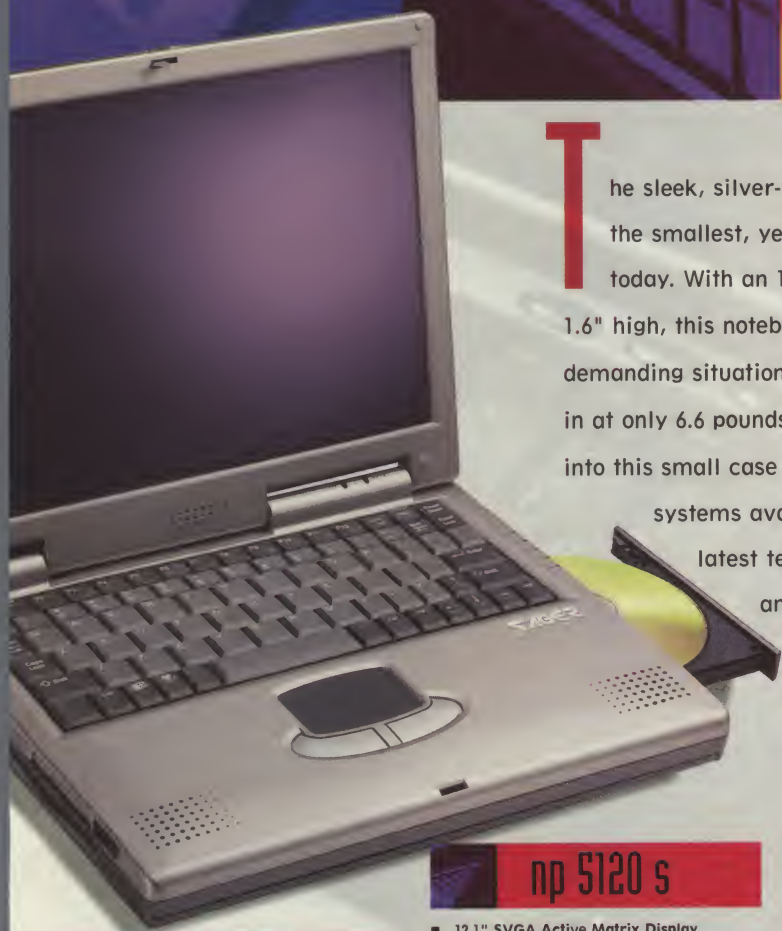
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- 1 IEEE-1394 Port
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- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
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TRENDS

Not Just Idle Chatter

Instant messaging is a great way to communicate, at work or at home. As the technology takes off, new applications—and new dangers—are appearing on the horizon.

According to industry analyst IDC, corporate instant messaging will soar from 5.5 million users in 2000 to more than 180 million in 2004. And the research firm Gartner predicts that instant messaging will surpass e-mail as the primary way people communicate electronically by 2005.

"Instant messaging allows a sense of community, and it helps [prevent] isolation of remote workers," says Maureen Caplan Grey, senior research

analyst with Gartner. As a result, Grey says, there is a grassroots movement among businesses to make the technology work for them.

Such a huge potential market spells good news for companies such as **ActiveBuddy** (www.activebuddy.com), which creates instant-messaging bots that provide information. For example, its SmarterChild bot can be accessed via **America Online's** Instant Messenger (www.aol.com), **Microsoft's** MSN Messenger Service (messenger.msn.com), or **Yahoo's** Yahoo Messenger (messenger.yahoo.com). Once users add SmarterChild to their buddy lists, the interactive agent will answer questions on topics ranging from stocks to astrology.

Instant messaging is not only a vehicle of communication between people, but



facetime.com) is creating privacy and security tools for the medium.

But with the good comes the bad. As the use of instant messaging explodes, viruses such as the W32/Hello worm, which enticed users of MSN Messenger earlier this year, will likely

proliferate. between people and content, says Chris Bray, vice president of application development for ActiveBuddy.

Among the companies venturing into the instant-messaging waters, **Jabber** (www.jabber.com) is working on a set of products based on open standards, and **FaceTime Communications** (

Many companies have not dealt adequately with the security risks that are inherent in instant messaging, says Gartner's Grey. Just as firms developed security procedures for the use of e-mail, they must take a good, hard look at instant messaging, she says.

—Tamara Holmes

Mowing the Lawn of the Future

Back when we watched George and Judy Jetson live their futuristic lives, the idea of robots taking over everyday tasks seemed exciting, yet far-fetched. Robotic appliances are taking off, however, and if you buy one of the most popular, you may never have to mow the lawn again.

Robot lawn mowers, like the Robomower by **Friendly Robotics** (www.friendlyrobotics.com) and the iMow by **Toro** (www.toro.com), are battery-operated (no engine noise), mulch grass (no raking), have audio obstacle warnings (no danger for pets), and can mow a flat yard up to 3,500 square feet using a perimeter wire for guidance.

So far, few people have bought robot lawn mowers, which cost between \$700 and \$900, but that may change. Friendly Robotics has sold close to 4,000 units in the United States since its launch last year, and Toro, which is testing the iMow in

four U.S. markets, plans a larger rollout for 2002.

The research arm of ActivMedia, which manufactures a line of robotic devices, predicts robotics are poised for explosive growth, much as computers were in the early 1980s. According to the firm's research, sales of mobile robots will grow more than 3,500 percent in the next five years, reaching more than \$17 billion in sales by 2005.

Harry Wolhandler, vice president of research at ActivMedia, thinks robotics will eventually be used for a multitude of applications, including wheelchairs, surgery, and cars. The next robot appliance to hit the



Friendly Robotics Robomower

street will be a vacuum cleaner, which Friendly Robotics plans to launch next year, followed by a snow blower and personal caddy.

A floating, talking maid is probably still a few years away.

—Elaine X. Grant

Need a Fishing License? Cast Your Net Online

Stop by your state's Web site these days, and you might find more than information about the state bird. Janet Grard, director of eGovernment Services for the **Arkansas Information Consortium** (www.ark.org), explains that some state sites provide everything from point-and-click license renewals to eBay-style auctions of surplus items.

Grard's group is a subsidiary of e-government solutions provider **National Information Consortium** (www.nicusa.com), and her team oversaw the creation of Arkansas' site, which sells everything from bulk seedlings to online registration renewals. "If you're renewing a license, you can print it out from your computer and go hunting or fishing immediately," she says. Visitors can even purchase products, ranging from garments to furniture, made by incarcerated individuals.

Expect to see more government online, according to Jeremy Sharrard, associate analyst at Forrester Research, even though many government entities haven't been overwhelmingly successful with online offerings. "Just because you move something online doesn't mean that you can diminish your offline presence," he explains. "In the short term, it creates another channel that you need to pour money into."

States also face some unique issues, including ensuring that citizens have adequate Internet access. And many state sites are funded by unpopular transaction fees, because they can't or won't accept advertising.

Yet in spite of the challenges, Sharrard believes that all states will offer at least minimal services online in the near future, with the biggest opportunities being in business transactions such as permit renewals and sales-tax reporting.

—Gwen Moran



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¹Maximum data transfer rate dependent upon variables including particular modems with which you are communicating, telephone lines, communications software and communications protocols. ²Pocket Streets for Microsoft® Windows® CE requires Windows® CE 2.0 or later. Hardware available separately. ³TO AVOID BEING CHARGED A MONTHLY FEE, CANCEL BEFORE ONE-YEAR PERIOD ENDS. One-year period begins 30 days from receipt of system. You may incur surcharges even during promotional period for premium services, or long distance charges on your phone bill, depending on location and calling plan. Communication surcharges may also apply with some access numbers and in AK. For details and access numbers call 1-800-846-2000. Check with your local phone company to determine whether the access number you select is a local call for your calling plan. New U.S. members 18 and older only. Major credit card or checking account required. Use may be limited, especially during peak usage.



Solo 5300



Gateway 500X



Solo 1200

The best things come in small packages. Perfect for home or office use, the Solo 5300 has it all. It delivers desktop-caliber performance. It offers maximum versatility on the road. And its thin, lightweight design won't weigh you down. Ounce for ounce, this notebook can't be beat.

Stuffed with features. The Gateway 500X offers a lot for a little. With so much power and performance, you can do everything from run the most demanding multimedia applications to play the latest digital games. And when you compare it with the competition, you'll discover this desktop stands alone.

It doesn't have to be expensive to be good. Just because you're on a budget doesn't mean you have to skimp. Affordable yet capable, the Solo 1200 is a smart choice for the starving student or value-minded professional who's on the go. It even offers wireless capabilities, so you'll enjoy more freedom than ever.



Take digital photos of friends and family.

Gateway PhotoWare™ Picture This! Photo Solution \$350.⁵ This all-in-one package makes it possible to take photos on your new digital camera, download them to your Gateway PC, and then print them on premium Kodak™ photo paper. It's that easy.



Play your favorite holiday tunes on your PC.

Gateway MusicWare™ CD Creator Pack \$135.⁵ (at time of purchase). Make your own CDs and get everything you need to become a digital-music mix master—from the latest music software to a pack of 50 CD-R media disks.



Solo® 1200SE Notebook

- 12.1" XGA TFT Active Matrix
- Intel® Celeron™ Processor 800MHz
- 128MB SDRAM
- 10GB Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Integrated v.90 Modem
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Integrated 24X CD-ROM Drive and Floppy Drive
- Microsoft® Windows®XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Works Suite 2001²
- 1-Year America Online® Internet Access (new members only)³
- 1-Year Limited Warranty⁴
- \$999⁵

Solo 5300CL Notebook

- 14.1" XGA TFT Active Matrix
- Intel Pentium® III Processor 900MHz
- 128MB SDRAM
- 10GB Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Integrated v.90 Modem
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Modular 8X DVD-ROM Drive and Floppy Drive
- Microsoft® Windows®XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Works Suite 2001²
- 1-Year America Online Internet Access (new members only)³
- 1-Year Limited Warranty⁴
- \$1,499⁵

Gateway® 500X Desktop

- Intel Pentium 4 Processor 1.70GHz
- 15" Flat Panel Display (15" viewable)
- 256MB SDRAM
- 40GB Hard Drive
- Recordable/Rewriteable CD-RW & DVD Drive
- Boston Acoustics® BA735™ Speakers with Subwoofer
- 56K Modem¹
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Microsoft® Windows®XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Works Suite 2001²
- 1-Year America Online Internet Access (new members only)³
- 1-Year Limited Warranty⁴
- \$1,499⁵

Gateway 700XL Desktop

- Intel Pentium 4 Processor 2.00GHz
- 15" Flat Panel Display (15" viewable)
- 512MB RDRAM
- 80GB Hard Drive
- Recordable/Rewriteable CD-RW & DVD Drive
- Boston Acoustics BA7500™ Speakers with Subwoofer
- 1394 IEEE PCI Card
- 56K Modem¹
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Microsoft® Windows®XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Works Suite 2001²
- 1-Year America Online Internet Access (new members only)³
- 1-Year Limited Warranty⁴
- \$2,629⁵

AOL Keyword: Gateway

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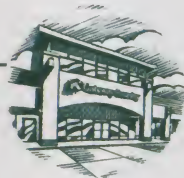
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Sixteen years ago, Gateway started on a cattle farm in Iowa. Our consistent ability to deliver state-of-the-art technology, incredibly affordable prices and top-notch customer service has helped us become the fourth largest computer company in the country. Today, with nearly 300 stores nationwide to serve you, Gateway makes it easier to buy, service and learn about technology than ever before. Quite simply, there is no company better suited or more committed to helping you meet your technology needs.



TRENDS

A Bus for Rapid Transit

Today, your 2GHz processor—the PC's brain, in essence—makes you a speed demon. Future performance gains, however, may rely on the PC's central nervous system, the PCI bus. This data path connects the processor to various parts of the PC, such as hard drives and network-interface cards. The PCI bus debuted in 1993, and it's due for an overhaul.

Although the PCI and the later-generation PCI-X found in computers today are adequate for most uses, analysts expect that as demand for real-time audio, video, and other high-bandwidth applications increases, faster data-transfer speeds will be necessary. In early August the **PCI Special Interest Group** (www.pcisig.com), which helps develop and manage PCI configurations, began working with the **Arapahoe Work Group**, primarily backed by **Intel**, to hammer out the new PCI standard, named 3GIO. Intel's rival, **AMD**, has its own PCI technol-

ogy named HyperTransport, but according to Roger Tipley, president of the PCI-SIG, AMD did not submit a proposal to the group for HyperTransport's consideration.

By increasing the frequency of the data moving through each connecting pin, 3GIO can increase data-transfer speeds while decreasing the number of pins, which will cut costs. According to Tipley, a 32-bit PCI bus found in today's com-

puters needs approximately 50 I/O pins to deliver data at 133MB per second. Although exact transfer speeds are still uncertain, Tipley says that a 1-bit-wide 3GIO bus could transfer data at 250MB per second with only four I/O pins, while a 16-bit-wide bus could transfer data at 4GB per second with 64 I/O pins. He adds that this scalability is one reason that the PCI-SIG chose to back 3GIO.

What does this mean for

consumers? Not a lot, for now. Cary Snyder, a senior analyst at In-Stat/MDR, predicts we won't see 3GIO in desktops until 2004 or 2005, when consumer applications that need the faster transfer speeds begin to appear. Tipley concurs, adding that, because current PCI devices are low-cost and readily available, they won't disappear from desktop and notebook computers anytime soon.

—Adam Fisher

Because One-Finger Typing Is So Slow

What good is an Internet-enabled cell phone if it takes 10 minutes to type a short e-mail message?

Rest your fingers: Manufacturers are coming to the rescue with speedier input devices. **Motorola's iBoard** (\$99.99, www.motorola.com/lmps/iden) is a full-size portable keyboard that allows you to type on your cell phone as you would a laptop, quickly composing e-mail and SMS messages, and phone-book and date-book entries. Similarly, **Sony Ericsson's Chatboard** (www.sonyericssonmobile.com) is designed with e-mail and SMS messaging in mind.

But mobile-phone keyboards will find limited acceptance in the United States, predicts Allen Nogee, senior analyst for wireless component technology at Cahners In-Stat Group. "Even if you have a better keyboard input, the displays are still small; you really only solve one part of the equation," he says. "People don't want the aggravation of the larger size that these larger keyboards offer."

If a keyboard isn't your style, you may be in luck. More and more phones now include predictive text input, a software feature that can make typing on that tiny keypad a little less tedious. The phone guesses the word you are attempting to type, which can save keystrokes.

—Kevin Savetz



Motorola iBoard

Christmas Trees the New-Fashioned Way



Ready to hike into the woods and chop down a spruce? We didn't think so. These five e-tailers offer a wide range of Christmas trees at reasonable prices, fresh-cut and delivered straight to your door.

	Tree Type/ Size (Feet)	Secure Shopping	Price	Shipping	Total Cost
Blue Mountain Tree Farm www.bluemountaintrees.com	Douglas, Fraser, and concolor firs/ 5 to 7	Yes	\$89 to \$114	Free	\$89 to \$114
4Giftgiving.com www.4giftgiving.com	Balsam and Fraser firs/ 6 to 7	Yes	\$46.80 to \$54.80	\$12, plus additional charge that varies by location	\$58.80 to \$66.80 (plus shipping)
L.L.Bean www.llbean.com	Maine balsam/ 5.3 to 7	Yes	\$65 to \$75	\$5.95	\$70.95 to \$80.95
Meadowbrook Hill Farm www.realholidaytrees.com	Douglas fir/ 5 to 6	Yes	\$64	Free	\$64
Shady Rest Tree Farm www.shadyrestreefarm.com	White pine and Fraser fir/ 4.5 to 7	Yes	\$46 to \$76	Free east of Mississippi; \$10 west of Mississippi	\$46 to \$76 (\$56 to \$86 west of Mississippi)

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THINK GREEN.



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AMD Duron processor-based systems.

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AMD border for special offers from
our featured vendors.

Visit our website at www.amd.com for the latest benchmark information

A Box for Gen X (and Y)

EDITED BY BRIAN BENNETT

Microsoft Xbox

What it is:

The \$299 Xbox is Microsoft's hotly anticipated hardware designed to propel the software titan to the forefront of console gaming. The big boys in Redmond aren't worried about competition from the likes of Nintendo and Sony. Here's why.

Inside the box:

If the hype isn't enough to tweak your curiosity, the console's specs will. Look under the hood, and you'll find a 733MHz Intel engine that revs up to desktop-level processing speeds, an nVidia graphics subsystem that Microsoft claims is three times faster than that of any other game system, and an 8GB hard drive, a first for the console world. The device is also equipped with an Ethernet port for white-knuckle online deathmatches via broadband connection, and extra goodies such as four game-controller ports for multiplayer gaming and a front-loading DVD tray.

Outside the box:

But what about the games? The Xbox will launch with 15 to 20 titles from leading developers such as Sega, Electronic Arts, THQ, and LucasArts. Games to watch for: Halo, WWF: Raw Is War, Dark Summit, and NFL Fever 2002.

X marks the spot:

Microsoft, www.xbox.com

34973



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For real-time pricing, go to shopper.com and enter number.

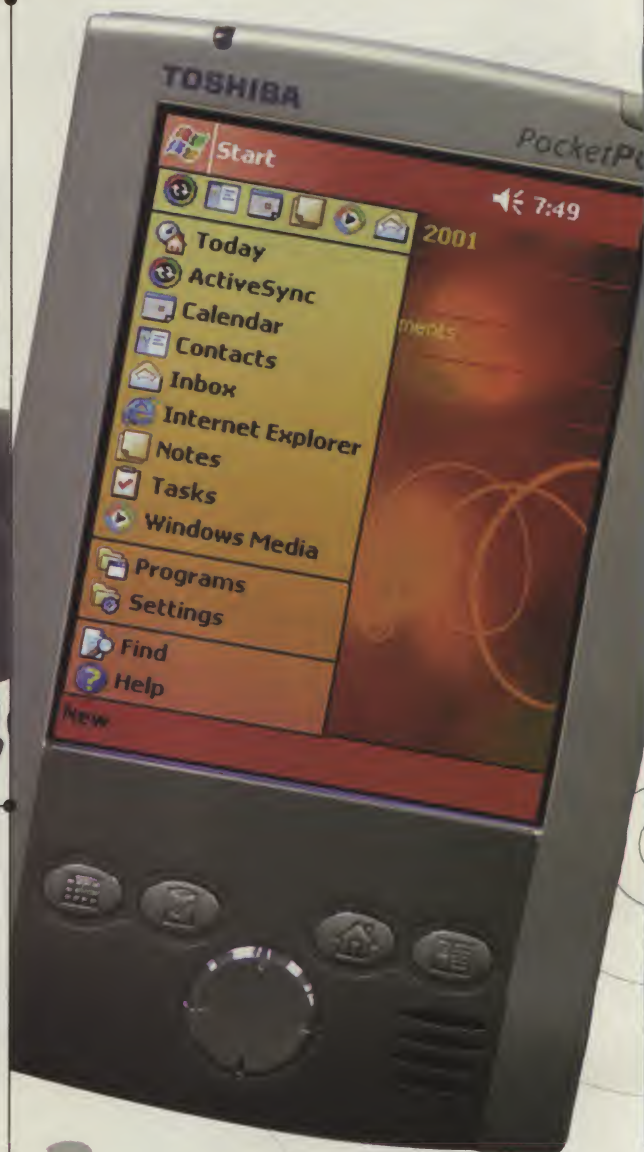
GEAR



1



2



3

1

puptronics

If you prefer artificial Christmas trees because they're hassle-free, Sony's \$850 **AIBO LM Series** may be your perfect pets. The latest in the AIBO line of robotic dogs, these pups have been weaned just in time for the holidays. Available in two cuddly varieties, Latte and Macaron, they each store a 75-word vocabulary, use four senses, can snap digital photos, and have a repertoire of (almost) lifelike movements. You can even purchase optional Memory Stick-based applications to give them additional personality. Now that's bow-wow-rific!

➤ **Sony AIBO LM Series**
Sony Electronics
www.aibo.com
34976

2

card collector

Compact your business-card stacks fast with the \$149.95 **Presto BizCard Reader** from NewSoft. Based on FineReader OCR technology, the tiny 4-ounce scanner provides one of the simplest and smallest solutions for entering business-card information into your PC. About the size of a deck of cards, the Presto delivers a 600dpi scanning resolution and relies on Smart Field Identification technology to automatically recognize and sort scanned data into the appropriate fields. After collecting all that info, export it to Outlook or Act on either Palm or Windows CE devices.

➤ **NewSoft Presto BizCard Reader**
NewSoft
www.newsoftinc.com
34975

3

pocket potency

Running on Microsoft's new Pocket PC 2002 OS for handhelds, and equipped with advanced features such as Secure Digital and CompactFlash expansion slots, the new \$569 **Toshiba Pocket PC e570** delivers exceptional expandability and connectivity in a pocketable 6.3-ounce package. Hardware communication add-ons include optional Bluetooth and Wi-Fi wireless modules, as well as a GPS transceiver. The e570 is powered by a 206MHz Intel StrongARM engine, comes with 64MB of RAM, and shines with a 240-by-320 reflective color TFT. USB, serial, and infrared ports ensure quick uplink to your PC.

➤ **Toshiba Pocket PC e570**
Toshiba America Information Systems
www.toshiba.com
34974

4

roam cam

Ultraportable and megastylish, the \$799 **Camedia D-40 Zoom** from Olympus is a must for photo fans who like to travel light. Decked out with a whopping 4-megapixel CCD that captures images at resolutions of up to 2,272 by 1,704, the compact 6.7-ounce D-40 is perfect for weekend shutterbugs or semipro photographers looking to print images in large formats. The D-40 includes a 2.8x optical zoom lens, a 16MB SmartMedia card, and a new 10-position dial control that limits your need to navigate menus. This sharpshooter also has a full-manual mode for those who like total control.

➤ **Olympus Camedia D-40 Zoom**
Olympus America
www.olympus.com
34977

5

television evolution

Taking television to its next logical level, Panasonic's **TC-11LV1** fuses a high-resolution 11-inch LCD and a compact DVD player to yield a 21st-century viewing experience. Priced at \$1,599 and designed for the person who's got it all, the TC-11LV1 supports 854-by-480 resolution in a 16-to-9 aspect ratio and features built-in stereo speakers. A 181-channel TV tuner and Dolby Digital Surround decoder with DTS output ensure optimal home-theater connections, and the Panasonic's light 7.1-pound weight guarantees easy-on-the-shoulders transport from den to bedroom.

➤ **Panasonic TC-11LV1**
Panasonic Consumer Electronics
www.panasonic.com
34978

6

hollywood tots

If you've got budding little filmmakers in the house, don't make them wait until they're old enough for film school to start their cinematic education. With the \$99 **Intel Play Digital Movie Creator**, a handheld video-capturing toy styled like an old 8mm camera, directors of tomorrow can begin making movies today. The Digital Movie Creator captures video and audio at or away from the computer, enabling youngsters to use the included PC software to add transitions, special effects, and animations. Then they can whip up titles and credits, and screen their masterpieces on the PC or distribute them via e-mail.

➤ **Intel Play Digital Movie Creator**
Intel
www.intelplay.com
34979

4



5

6



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COMPAQ

IBM

3COM

Microsoft

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PC Mall is one of the fastest growing Symantec and Microsoft licensing partners in the country. We didn't get there by accident. It took a lot of hard work and training. We are also on our way to becoming the leaders in Networking, Servers, Storage & Licensing.

The Best Pricing is Here!

PC Mall's partnerships with leading manufacturers enable us to bring you the widest selection of products at the lowest prices. We work hard to get the best possible deals so we can pass the savings on to you.

Desktops

COMPAQ

Deskpro EX 1.5GHz
Intel® Pentium® 4 processor
256MB RAM, 20GB Hard Drive
48X CD-ROM, Windows 2000
\$1,249 #785380
Monitor and speakers sold separately.

COMPAQ

Presario 5320US 1.5GHz
Intel® Pentium® 4 processor
512MB RAM, 40GB HD, NIC, DVD
12X CD-RW, 56K, Windows XP
\$999 #962832
Monitor and speakers sold separately.

IBM

NetVista A22P 1.5GHz
Intel® Pentium® 4 processor
64MB RAM, 20GB Hard Drive
48X CD-ROM, 10/100 NIC, W98
\$797 #328004
Monitor and speakers sold separately.

SONY

PCV-RX550 1.5GHz
Intel® Pentium® 4 processor
256MB RAM, 60GB, DVD/CD-RW
56K, 10/100 NIC, Win XP
\$1,099 #962858
Monitor and speakers sold separately.

Notebooks

COMPAQ

EVO™ Compaqs are here!
The evolution of Compaq products.
Call for details on this new line.
starting at
\$1,299 #961345

TOSHIBA

Satellite 3000 900MHz
Intel® Pentium® III processor
128MB RAM, 20GB HD, DVD
56K modem, 14.1" TFT display
Windows Me
\$1,449 #962375

COMPAQ

Presario 1720US 1GHz
Intel® Pentium® III processor
256MB RAM, 20GB HD, DVD
RW Combo, 14.1" TFT, Win XP
\$1,599 #321661 *Price after
\$100 mfr. mail-in rebate. Expires 2/24/02.

IBM

ThinkPad A30 1.13GHz
Intel® Pentium® III processor
128MB RAM, 30GB HD, DVD
56K, 10/100 NIC, 15" TFT
display, Windows 98
\$2,349 #963505

Servers

RaQ 4i Server Appliance

w/256MB RAM
20.4GB HD
\$1,599⁹⁹ #961847
While supplies last.

NetServer LC2000 1GHz

Intel® Pentium® III processor
128MB RAM
32X CD-ROM
\$2,799 #954597

ProLiant DL360 933MHz

Intel® Pentium® III processor, 128MB RAM
2X NIC, 24X CD-ROM
\$2,039 #873346

X Series 220 1GHz

Intel® Pentium® III processor
128MB RAM, 48X CD-ROM
NIC, No OS
\$799 #957599

Networking

Barricade Cable/DSL Router

with 4 10/100 ports
w/Print server
\$79⁹⁹ #781537

Cisco 1720 VPN Modular 10/100 Router

24 port
10/100 Switch
\$849⁹⁹ #812633

Etherlink 10/100 PCI Adapter w/Management

\$54⁹⁹ #49707

LINKSYS Wireless Networking!

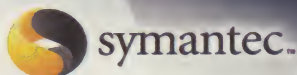
#851968 Wireless Access Point \$149⁹⁹
#851969 Wireless PCI Adapter \$39⁹⁹
#851970 Wireless PC Card \$83⁹⁹
#948463 Wireless Cable/DSL Router \$199⁹⁹

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75GB HD EIDE Hard Drive

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7200RPM
\$249⁹⁵ #839704



Iomega® Zip® 100MB USB Drive

The portable Zip drive is the best way to move information.
\$99⁹⁵ #851263



Pioneer DVD Recordable Drive

\$669 #961143



40/80GB DLT IV Fuji media for all your storage needs!

\$56⁹⁵ #86722
Call for volume discounts.



Software and Licensing

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The essential tool for universal document exchange!
Upgrade only
\$87⁹⁹ #957481



Adobe® Illustrator 10

The industry standard vector graphics software.
Upgrade only
\$138⁹⁹ #963238



Microsoft Office XP Pro

The smarter work experience.
Upgrade only
\$289 #976687



Norton SystemWorks Pro 2001

as low as **\$49⁹⁹** #951658
After \$30 mfr. mail-in rebate when purchased w/Office XP.



Peripherals

Back-UPS Office USB 500

3 battery backups outlets and 3 surge suppression outlets plus telephone protection w/USB ports.
\$99⁹⁹ #204261



15" LCD Display

15.1" Active Matrix TFT
Max. res. 1024 x 768
\$319 #961657



Laserjet 4100N

25ppm black
1200 x 1200dpi
\$1,499⁹⁹ #948807



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upgrade only **\$229!** #962913

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Editors' Top Five

5

Computer Shopper and CNET.com editors handpick this month's best desktops, notebooks, handhelds, inkjets, and productivity apps. For more Top Fives and full reviews, go to top5.cnet.com.



Voodoo Monsoon EGAD-DDR

Performance Desktops

PRODUCT	EDITORS' RATING	PRICE	SPECS	BOTTOM LINE
ABS Performance System 8 www.abspc.com	8	\$2,399 34948	2GHz Pentium 4; 256MB RDRAM; 60GB hard drive; 19-inch CRT; nVidia GeForce3	Pulls ahead of the crowd with an excellent component selection, including 5.1-channel Klipsch speakers and a comprehensive game bundle.
Apple Power Mac G4 www.apple.com	9	\$2,499 34949	867MHz PowerPC G4; 128MB SDRAM; 60GB hard drive; nVidia GeForce2 MX; no monitor	Packs the fastest CPU ever seen in a Mac. Also outfitted with Apple's SuperDrive DVD/CD burner, as well as two IEEE 1394 (FireWire) and two USB ports.
Dell Dimension 8200* www.dell.com	8	\$2,217 34950	2GHz Pentium 4; 256MB RDRAM; 100GB hard drive; 19-inch CRT; nVidia GeForce3	Brimming with top-shelf hardware, this is one of the fastest systems available. An excellent fit for gamers, number crunchers, and A/V enthusiasts.
Gateway 700C* www.gateway.com	8	\$2,569 34951	2GHz Pentium 4; 256MB RDRAM; 80GB hard drive; 15-inch LCD; nVidia GeForce3	Built for speed and comfort, a system that has it all—including a huge hard drive, excellent speakers, and a crisp 15-inch LCD.
Voodoo Monsoon EGAD-DDR www.voodoopc.com	8	\$3,671 34952	1.4GHz Athlon; 256MB DDR; two 40GB hard drives; 19-inch CRT; nVidia GeForce3	With an overclocked CPU and dual RAID-controlled hard drives, this stylish speed demon made mincemeat of our benchmarks. Plus, a transparent window shows off its premium innards.



Apple iBook

Value Notebooks

PRODUCT	EDITORS' RATING	PRICE	SPECS	BOTTOM LINE
Apple iBook www.apple.com	9	\$1,299 34963	500MHz PowerPC G3; 64MB SDRAM; 10GB hard drive; 12.1-inch TFT; ATI Rage Mobility	Bests earlier iBooks with its low price, light weight, and fantastic combination of form and function. One of the finest low-cost notebooks we've seen to date.
Compaq Presario 1215US www.compaq.com	7	\$1,599 34964	1GHz Athlon 4; 128MB SDRAM; 20GB hard drive; 14.1-inch TFT; ATI Mobility M1	Speedy gigahertz performance for a low price. This three-spindle notebook delivers a surprisingly comprehensive list of options.
Dell Inspiron 2500* www.dell.com	7	\$1,198 34965	900MHz Pentium III; 128MB SDRAM; 10GB hard drive; 14.1-inch TFT; integrated ATI Rage Mobility 128	An impressive budget notebook for users who aren't looking for a graphics or gaming powerhouse. Extra attractions: long battery life and a generous software bundle.
Gateway Solo 1200* www.gateway.com	8	\$999 34966	800MHz Celeron; 128MB SDRAM; 10GB hard drive; 12.1-inch TFT; S3 Twister	An under-\$1,000 portable that packs surprising punch into its small frame, including an active-matrix screen, three drives, and reasonably good application performance.
HP Pavilion n5450 www.hp.com	7	\$1,899 34967	850MHz Pentium III; 128MB SDRAM; 20GB hard drive; 15-inch TFT; S3 SavageIX	A competitively priced desktop replacement that comes loaded with a wide screen, long battery life, and DVD/CD-RW. Delivers an excellent multimedia experience.

* = Configuration changed from the original review

00000 = **Shopper Price It!** For real-time pricing, go to shopper.com and enter number.



Compaq iPaq H3670

Handhelds

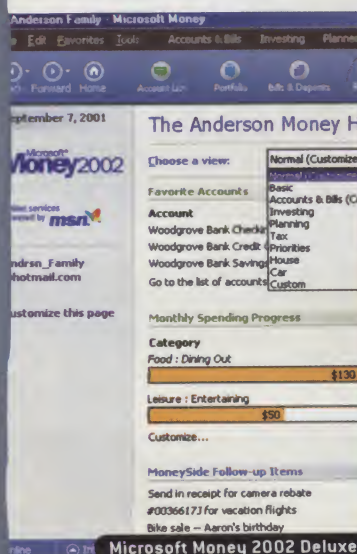
PRODUCT	EDITORS' RATING	PRICE	SPECS	BOTTOM LINE
Compaq iPaq H3670 www.compaq.com	8	\$549 34953	64MB RAM; 240x320 resolution; 12-bit color; Windows for Pocket PC; 5.8 ounces	Delivers performance rivaling that of the fastest handhelds. Perfect for power users and multimedia enthusiasts.
Handspring Visor Pro www.handspring.com	7	\$299 34954	16MB RAM; 160x160 resolution; 4-bit monochrome; Palm OS 3.5.2H3; 5.4 ounces	Combines the best aspects of the Handspring line with an extra 8MB of memory and an innovative, stylus-free contact-lookup feature. A good value for the price.
HP Jornada 565 www.hp.com	7	\$599 34955	32MB RAM; 240x240 resolution; 16-bit color; Pocket PC 2002; 6.1 ounces	Based on Microsoft's new Pocket PC 2002 OS. Moves to the head of the class with its long battery life, 65,000-color display, and big bundle of multimedia software.
Palm Vx www.palm.com	8	\$299 34956	8MB RAM; 160x160 resolution; 4-bit monochrome; Palm OS 3.3; 5.1 ounces	Even though it's been around a while, still a great choice for users looking for a stylish PDA without a host of compromises.
Sony CLIEPEG-N610C www.sony.com	8	\$399.99 34957	8MB RAM; 320x320 resolution; 16-bit color; Palm OS 4.0; 5.7 ounces	With a gorgeous 65,000-color display and cutting-edge processor, it's the top pick for anyone who demands the best a handheld has to offer.



Canon S600 Color Bubble Jet Printer

Inkjet Printers

PRODUCT	EDITORS' RATING	PRICE	SPECS	BOTTOM LINE
Canon S600 Color Bubble Jet Printer www.canon.com	8	\$149 34958	Maximum resolution: 1,200x1,200 (b&w), 2,400x1,200 (color); USB/parallel-port interfaces	Performs like a high-end inkjet, but without the associated steep price. Added advantages: low per-page cost and fast output.
Canon S800 Color Bubble Jet Photo Printer www.canon.com	8	\$299 34959	Maximum resolution: 2,400x1,200; USB/parallel-port interfaces	Gains a competitive edge with its excellent photo printing and fast print speeds. Also, offers a wide range of print options and produces stunning images at 1,200x1,200.
Epson Stylus Color 777i www.epson.com	7	\$59 34960	Maximum resolution: 2,880x720; USB interface	A prime pick for budget-conscious home or small-office users. Features a trim and compact design, good graphics and photo printing, and relatively fast output.
Epson Stylus Photo 785EPX www.epson.com	8	\$199 34961	Maximum resolution: 2,880x720; USB interface	Offers excellent photo output and a wide range of features, including a slot for printing directly from your digital camera's memory card.
Epson Stylus Photo 2000P www.epson.com	9	\$899 34962	Maximum resolution: 1,440x720; USB/parallel-port interfaces	Turns out near-perfect printed photos. The first printer to introduce archival-quality inks and papers designed to last 200 years.



Microsoft Money 2002 Deluxe

Office Productivity Applications

PRODUCT	EDITORS' RATING	PRICE	REQUIRES	BOTTOM LINE
GoToMyPC www.gotomypc.com	8	\$119.40 (annually) 34968	Always-on broadband Net access (on host PC)	The easiest way to access your PC remotely via the Web. An ideal solution for anybody who travels for business or works from home.
Microsoft Money 2002 Deluxe www.microsoft.com	8	\$59.95 34857	166MHz Pentium or faster; 32MB RAM; 65MB hard drive space	A winning financial proposition for everyone but the most dedicated Quicken users, with its new Web-savvy, attractive interface, easy setup, and excellent long-term-planning tools.
Microsoft Office XP Standard www.microsoft.com	8	\$479 (full); \$239 (upgrade) 34970	133MHz Pentium or faster; 64MB RAM; 210MB hard drive space	Still the best office suite available. A worthwhile upgrade for businesses and group users looking for enhanced collaboration tools and recovery features.
MYOB Plus 11 www.myob.com	8	\$229 34971	Pentium or faster; 32MB RAM; 40MB hard drive space	Not enough new features to warrant an upgrade, but delivers plenty to keep new users smiling, including excellent customizability options and a streamlined interface.
Norton AntiVirus 2002 www.symantec.com	8	\$49.95 34912	133MHz Pentium or faster; 32MB RAM; 70MB hard drive space	Combines the powerful antivirus tools of its predecessor with XP support and better protection against e-mail- and script-based viruses.

JOHN
BLACKFORD

Avoid Software Dependency: Just Say No to Microsoft

Microsoft is generating a dazzling assortment of interrelated products and services. You don't need them all.

BACK WHEN BILL GATES FIRST HUNG HIS STAR ON THE Internet, his brain trust looked into the future and foresaw declining revenue, market saturation, and lengthening upgrade cycles. And that spells trouble in Redmond. Not one to brood, Bill unleashed his operating-system monopoly to help remedy the situation.

At the time, some believed Web browsers might supplant Windows, so preventing that was, in Gatespeak, mission-critical. Bundling Microsoft's own

Internet Explorer into Windows was just the visible part of the effort. Behind the scenes, Microsoft representatives pressured companies planning to promote the then market-leading Netscape. One particularly telling effort was Microsoft's threat to cancel Compaq's license to sell Windows if the company persisted in its plans to load Netscape on its PCs. In effect, Microsoft could have put Compaq out of business, because without Windows it had no business.

After the Netscape threat was dispatched, Microsoft accelerated efforts to bundle cool tools and utilities into the operating system, giving users more reasons to upgrade. But Gates' team still saw a wall: Users would become saturated with "free" extras and lengthen time between upgrades. Microsoft's challenge became extending sales of Windows and its Office productivity suite, while leveraging its monopoly to leap from a fading pony (shrink-wrapped software) to a completely different animal (software as a service).

The latest step, realized in Windows XP and Office XP, changes the way products are licensed and activated. Eventually, with .Net, users will rent Microsoft-owned or -authorized products and services via the

Web, including Windows and Office. They'll also access music, images, photo processing, instant messaging, e-mail, and other Web services. Usernames and passwords will be handled automatically via Microsoft's Passport authentication service.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

Only this: The interlocking features and services (some "free" with the operating system, others paid for by subscription) all pro-

mote and support one another. Windows XP exhorts you to sign up for Passport. Microsoft is betting it can exploit your current dependence on Windows to get you to sign up for Microsoft services by offering the path of least resistance.

The heck of it is these services are attractive; Microsoft does make fine software, if not in the first version, then eventually. And its marketing has been brilliant. But Microsoft's genius in product design and marketing is nearly equaled by its ineptness—and, let's be honest, arrogance—in customer relations. Licensing terms for Windows XP Professional (the corporate version) favor a two-year license, though most companies don't want to upgrade that often. Reaction to the program was so hostile that Microsoft recently pushed back the sign-up deadline.

On the consumer side, Windows XP and Office XP require product activation, a process whereby the software checks out your system and asks you to call or e-mail Microsoft for an activation code based on your configuration. If that changes too much (say, you upgrade memory, hard drive, and graphics card), your product may be deactivated. Supposedly, you can call Microsoft, explain the changes, and receive a new code. But once Microsoft is delivering code via the Web on a subscription basis, who's to say it won't pull the plug on your license if a payment is late? This is not an idle worry.

Bottom line: The cool services Microsoft offers mask a direct threat to the unfettered use of your computer—and your right to a competitive market. It's no wonder that, for the first time, significant numbers of users are now exploring alternatives to Microsoft products. The Linux OS has little of Windows' polish, but it's secure, stable, and cheap. Sun's StarOffice 6.0 suite will be available early in 2002, and the beta is already earning

glowing reviews. Not only is it free, but its XML-based file format is truly open, unlike Microsoft's proprietary formats. It runs on both Windows and Linux.

Take a hint. Microsoft offers great products, and some of them may be for you, but don't drift into total dependency. Preserve your options, and by voting with your dollars, give Microsoft the best incentive possible to alter its behavior.

john.blackford@cnet.com

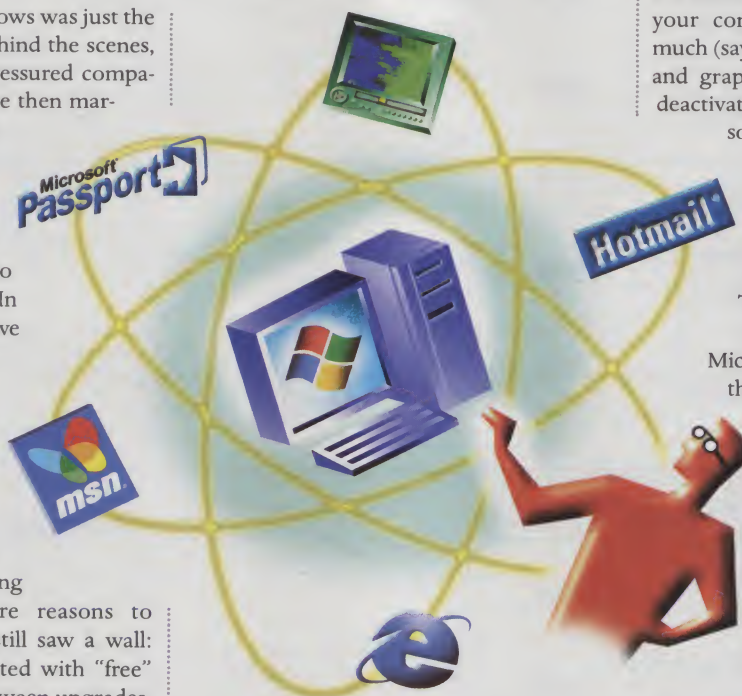


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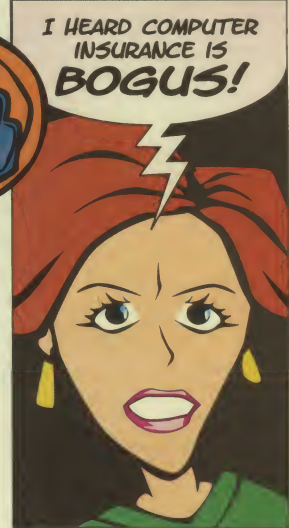
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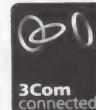
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A3C02



AS6000

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A4C03



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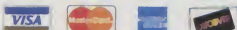
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Mr. David English

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S3C08



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JOHN C. DVORAK

The Handheld As Desktop

As Palm and Pocket PC devices gain processing power, they will eventually become capable of replacing the desktop PC.

AS MICROSOFT ROLLS OUT ITS POCKET PC 2002 OS INITIATIVE, it's time to consider the future of the small handheld device. If things go according to plan, the handheld computer should eventually become a desktop replacement. This is where Microsoft is taking the Pocket PC, whether the company knows it or not.

I've argued for years that with ever-shrinking, more-powerful chips, there's no reason the PC can't be shrunk into a handheld device not much different than the new Casio Cassiopeia E-200 or HP Jornada.

If a handheld could have the processing power of a desktop, and incorporate some video I/O and disk storage, there's no reason it couldn't be dropped into a docking cradle and hooked up to a keyboard, mouse, and monitor to provide the computing power of a normal desktop or tower computer. The cradle could be hooked to a DVD drive, printer, and other peripherals. As machines head in this direction—and they clearly are—some changes must be made.

First, you need a video I/O that's as good as a midrange desktop's. Right now some Pocket PCs are expected to have 800-by-600 video capability, allowing them to be used as PowerPoint caches for road warriors who don't want to lug a laptop. I'm told most of the units will soon be capable of 1,024-by-768 resolution, which is what most video projectors use.

Then you have to worry about code size because of the handheld's limited hard drive capacity. The IBM Microdrive, a perfect form factor for such a machine, is currently a 1GB technology and is expected to peak at 6GB. This limi-

tation is a concern because such a machine must have software designed for dual-mode use. The software must look like normal desktop software when the unit is in the cradle and revert to a handheld look and feel when used as a handheld. This is not trivial for a lot of



software, and it has to be done without adding a lot of code overhead.

After the basic PC-functionality issues are resolved with normal Ethernet and other I/O ports, the real options that make

the handheld different can be engineered into the devices. Many of them have been already. The most obvious is a wireless module that allows the units to talk to an 802.11b or phone network. With the addition of a simple earphone assembly, these things can replace cell phones and become multifunctional. From there you can add modules to turn the devices into still cameras or video phones. A GPS module could even be incorporated into the cell-phone module for navigational purposes.

All these subdevices should incorporate a PC Card port for I/O with the device. Collectively, they represent the variety of options you can plug into the device as needed. The machine thus becomes a multipurpose computer not unlike the PC, which thrives because it's programmable and multifunctional.

THE POLITICS OF PLATFORM PREFERENCE

After that, there's the politics of the handheld. The two platforms, Palm and Pocket PC, reflect a similar split on the desktop between the Mac and the PC. The Palm, an easier-to-use device with limited expandability, is analogous to the Mac; the Pocket PC relates to the more complex PC. But in this case, the Palm devices are famously cheaper than the Pocket PC devices, and the OS is available for license. Thus, unlike the Mac, the Palm enjoys a dominant market share, a situation that will likely continue. And unlike the PC-versus-Mac battle, there's a strong third player in the palmtop battle. Research In Motion and its hot little BlackBerry device have stolen users from both camps. The BlackBerry, though, doesn't look as if it wants to become a desktop replacement anytime soon.

As these little machines evolve, their functionality will increase to the point where they achieve general-purpose usage and complete desktop-replacement status. Already, Palm and Handspring Visor users are routinely using those foldable keyboards and typing directly into the handheld. This is a clear trend. When this new computing concept emerges, it will be bigger than anything we've ever expected, and I'd be surprised if we didn't have two platforms to choose from: Palm and Pocket PC.

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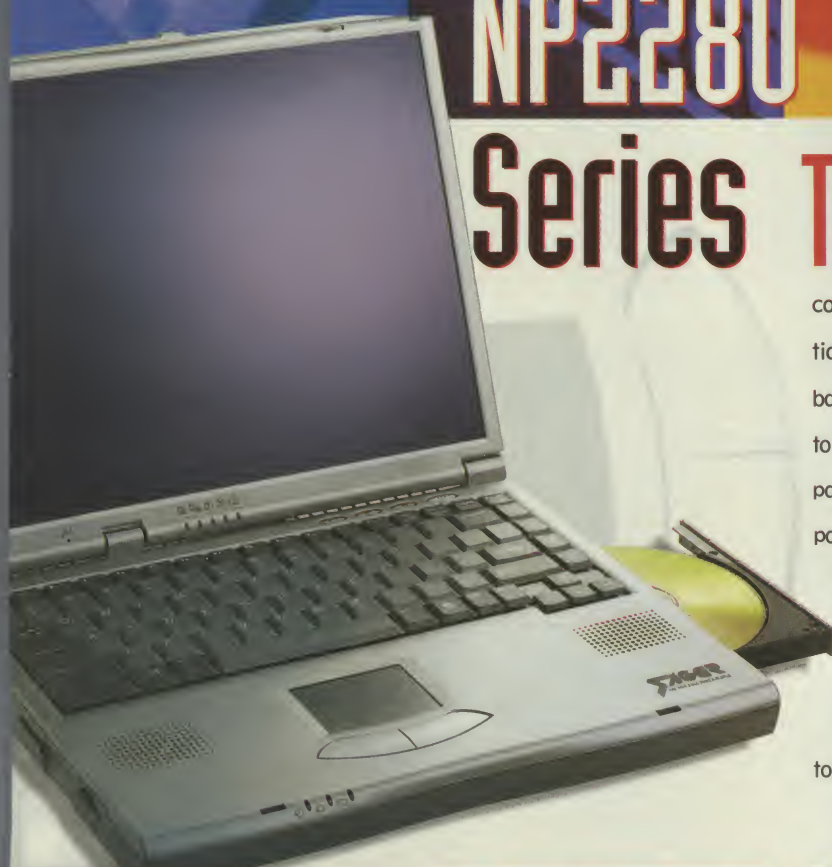
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Dot-Com Legacy Lives On

Brick-and-mortar stores are benefiting from the efficiencies of e-commerce.

IT'S HARD TO THINK ABOUT SOMETHING AS TRIVIAL AS SHOPPING as I write this in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. I'm torn between relief that my firefighter father and brother escaped with minor injuries, and a sense of loss for our friends, friends of friends, and those we didn't know at all who weren't so lucky.

But before I could process those thoughts, another event put a new perspective

on my life. My wife and I had triplets the day after the tragedy. Now I must increase spending while so many others scale back.

As I shopped for a minivan, baby gear, and even a new cell phone for my wife, I realized how deeply online shopping had become entwined with all my purchases, whether shipped to my home or picked up at a store. It may be small comfort to former dot-com employees, but the legacy of more efficient buying and selling lives on.

BY ANY OTHER MEASURE

Many brick-and-mortar stores don't even realize how valuable this legacy is. Jupiter Media Metrix found two-thirds of the return on investment from a Web presence comes through offline sales, and shoppers spend \$5 offline for every \$1 online as a direct result of online research.

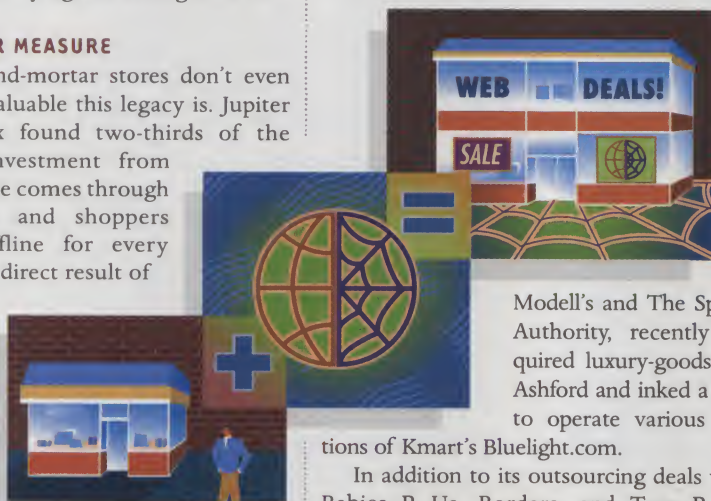
Nevertheless, 63 percent of retailers judge the success of their Web investments

by online sales alone, often mistakenly viewing Web divisions as unprofitable and failing to make needed improvements.

Lots of brick-and-mortar stores are heading in the right direction, however. Jupiter also found 75 percent of top retailers allow in-store returns for online purchases, and 34 percent plan to allow in-store pickup of online purchases. More than half of respon-

dents expect to feature more in-store inventory on their sites over the next 24 months, regardless of whether they allow online transactions.

Recognizing they shouldn't overspend on transaction technology, many companies are outsourcing their e-commerce operations to pure plays such as Amazon.com and Global Sports. The latter, which runs e-commerce sites for sporting-goods stores such as



Modell's and The Sports Authority, recently acquired luxury-goods site Ashford and inked a deal to operate various sections of Kmart's Bluelight.com.

In addition to its outsourcing deals with Babies R Us, Borders, and Toys R Us, Amazon announced at press time it would begin carrying listings for Target and Circuit City in November.

Through Amazon, Circuit City will even list items you can only pick up in-store. This may seem inconvenient, but being able to shop at home and pick up purchases in-store is a benefit. Because the hybrid Amazon/Babies R Us site lists only products the store ships direct, I had to drive 30 minutes just to

see the entire selection of cribs and car seats. What's more, I couldn't get store-location information or access to in-store discounts for parents of multiples.

Carmaker sites could also use a tune-up; their performance in providing information needed to drive dealership sales is poor. Another Jupiter report listed none of the automakers' Web sites among the top 10 in terms of overall traffic.

Here, independent research sites such as Edmunds.com and MSN Carpoint dominate. Carsdirect was an excellent resource for my minivan purchase through a dealer, because it not only showed list and invoice pricing, but indicated fair-market values in my ZIP code that updated in real time as I altered the options configurator. Automakers would be wise to adopt similar features. GM BuyPower and others are trying, but the results thus far have been less than useful.

I'm even looking into online grocery shopping again to accommodate our hectic schedules; this time through a partnership between Peapod and my local Stop & Shop. With the collapse of pure plays, Peapod has seen a surge of new users. But the legacy of the excellent online fulfillment systems those dot-coms built may not be lost. None other than Louis Borders, founder of Borders and Webvan, is reportedly interested in buying Webvan's technology assets at auction this fall. (Because Webvan has filed for bankruptcy, Borders would have to bid for the assets he wants.)

REVIVAL, AND A FAREWELL

The offline and online worlds are finally recognizing their interdependence. And like catalog vendors before them, pure plays with sound business models and strengths in price, selection, and customer service can thrive alongside retail chains, as evidenced by the recent \$20 million funding of one of my favorites, 800.com. Some analysts even see a pure-play revival. Statistics from Webmergers.com showed e-tailer closures declined for the third straight month.

After a decade of columns for *Computer Shopper*, this is my last. I wish you all great deals. That reminds me—I have to place a few orders for the kids. Bye for now!

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JUNE 2001 Computer Buyer's Guide Best Buy

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DESKTOPS

ATLAS MICRO XS 8000

A Speed Demon For the Tech-Savvy

WITH ITS GENERIC CASE AND MONITOR, THE \$1,249 ATLAS MICRO XS 8000 doesn't exactly ooze charm. On the other hand, it's very fast, and you probably couldn't build it any cheaper yourself. If you're comfortable enough with PCs to handle one that comes with no documentation or setup software, the XS 8000 offers an unbeatable combination of price and performance.

The XS 8000's components range from high-end to humble. For starters, you get a fast 1.4GHz Athlon processor, along with 128MB of DDR memory, a 12x DVD-ROM drive, and a 40GB hard drive (albeit spinning at a relatively poky 5,400rpm). Note that this system's standard configuration has been upgraded to 256MB of RAM since we tested. The system's Biostar M7MIA motherboard uses an AMD chipset and a Phoenix BIOS, and

offers a generous six PCI slots. The included 64MB nVidia GeForce3 graphics card will turn gamers' heads, especially given this PC's midrange price.

Atlas Micro didn't achieve such a low price without cutting a few corners, however. The XS 8000's entry-level audio system—a set of Cambridge SoundWorks CSW100 2.1 speakers (not pictured here) and a Sound Blaster SB16 sound card—produced marginal sound. The 19-inch house-brand monitor offers average image quality, but the adjustment controls are a bit clunky, suggesting that the monitor is cheaply made. Still, it offers a 0.26mm dot pitch and a maximum resolution of 1,600 by 1,200.

But just as mongrels sometimes make the best pets, the XS 8000's mixed pedigree seems to give it an advantage, at least in our performance tests. It consistently beat the similarly configured Gateway Select 1400 by a nose or more, even though the latter had a better config-

uration in some ways (at least on paper). Although a 1.4GHz Athlon-based Polywell Poly 880K7-1400 that passed through our labs outperformed the Atlas Micro XS 8000 by a noticeable margin in nearly all our tests, the XS 8000 bit back in our Quake III Arena test, beating the Poly 880K7-1400 by a hair and turning in one of the best scores we've seen to date (134.8 frames per second).

To say that the XS 8000 lacks documentation and software is not strictly true. Geeks will be happy to discover a tiny pamphlet explaining the motherboard jumper settings. And along with Windows 98 Second Edition (no Windows Me on this system), you get Sun's StarOffice pro-

ductivity suite, a freeware alternative to Microsoft Office. Atlas Micro need not have bothered—you can download StarOffice for free from Sun Microsystems' Web site (www.sun.com/software/star/staroffice) on your own.

The list of things we like about the Atlas Micro XS 8000 stops short of service and support. Our experiences with Atlas Micro

tech support indicate the one thing you may not get with this low-price system is adequate hand-holding when you have a problem. If you are able and willing to take on some computer conundrums yourself, you may not miss the support, but novices should consider going with a company that's better equipped to serve their needs.

Atlas Micro offers a three-year limited parts-and-labor warranty and a 30-day money-back guarantee. Toll-free technical support is available for the life of the system, but only during business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, Pacific time). If something

goes wrong with your PC, the company expects you to ship it back for service at your expense; the estimated turnaround time is three weeks. A better option for simple component replacement is to do it yourself; Atlas Micro's tech-support staff can send replacement hardware and talk you through the installation. An optional one-year onsite warranty is available for just \$39.

If you're on a budget and technically inclined, you'll find the Atlas Micro XS 8000 to be a great alternative to a pricier name-brand desktop. The lean software bundle and lack of 24/7 technical support may prove frustrating for newbies, however.

—Eric Knorr

EDITORS' RATING	7.0
RATED 1 TO 10	
< PROS > Fast; nVidia GeForce3 card; inexpensive	
< CONS > Limited service, support; scant documentation; lean software	
DIRECT PRICE: \$1,249	
< SPECS > 1.4GHz Athlon; 128MB DDR; 40GB hard drive; 12x DVD; 19-inch Atlas Micro CRT; nVidia GeForce3 graphics (64MB DDR); Sound Blaster SB16; Cambridge SoundWorks CSW100 speakers; Windows 98 SE; Sun StarOffice 5.2	
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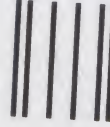
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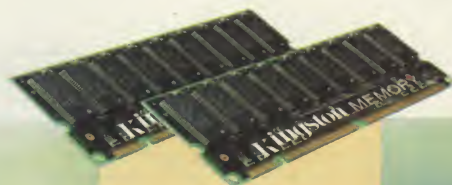
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You can customize virtually every component of a Mach V system, but the Talon comes only in two stock configurations: You choose just the monitor and the speakers. Our evaluation system, the \$1,495 Talon 3.1, uses a 1.13GHz AMD Athlon processor and 256MB of DDR memory. Don't judge this computer by its processor cycles alone, however. The tuned-



for-gaming Talon left a similarly configured system, the 1.3GHz Athlon-based HP Pavilion 7875, in the dust in our benchmark tests.

The Talon 3.1 doesn't include all the extras of the Mach V, but it's clearly built with the same level of care. A glimpse inside the minitower case shows all the cables routed to maximize airflow around the two case fans. The company gives the same attention to the software installation. You won't find your taskbar cluttered with memory- and CPU-hogging utilities—you'll see only the speaker icon.

Note that this minimalist approach extends to the software bundle as well. The system ships with only Windows Me, driver and system-restore discs, and a single game demo. If you need an office suite to go with your games, you'll have to provide that yourself.

A GeForce2 Ultra card powers the graphics. It's not as fast as a GeForce3 card, but it's nearly so and quick enough to turn in a quite nimble 115.5 frames per second (fps) in Quake III Arena. Of course, hardcore gamers often want the fastest and latest technology to secure bragging rights. But while the Talon 3.1's components are merely really fast rather than the absolute fastest, the system runs today's most demanding games without a stutter. It will be some time before its parts become dated.

The system includes a 7,200rpm Ultra ATA/100 20GB hard drive. It's plenty speedy but rather small by today's standards, especially when you consider how many games now require 1GB or more for a full install. The audio combination of a Sound Blaster Live Value card and Klipsch's ProMedia 2.1 speaker system (two satellites and a subwoofer) provides astonishing

acoustics. The ProMedia speakers can pump out room-shaking volume with no loss of clarity.

The bundled keyboard is a bit light and slides around too easily during spirited gaming, but its tactile feel is excellent. The included Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse is very responsive, but we'd like to see a four-button model included for that extra gaming edge.

We'd suggest passing on the 17-inch Optique Q71 monitor that shipped with our review unit. Although games looked fine, text on the Windows desktop had a decidedly fuzzy quality. Worse, at the maximum resolution of 1,280 by 1,024, the monitor offered only a flickery 60Hz refresh rate. Instead, we recommend the ViewSonic G73f, also offered by Falcon Northwest, which costs \$105 more but is a much better display. It can dish up that 1,280-by-1,024 screen at 80Hz, for example.

Falcon Northwest offers a one-year parts and labor warranty on the Talon, although you'll have to pay to ship your system back to the factory for repair. Our experiences with the company's tech-support line indicate that a hardware- and game-savvy staff handles the incoming calls. In other words, you won't feel like you know more than the tech-support staff if you ever have to make a call for help.

The Talon 3.1 comes in at a lower price than the custom-built gaming PCs from Falcon Northwest and its competitors, but it's still costlier than Athlon PCs with similar specs from ABS Computer and other mainstream manufacturers. But that extra investment proves worthwhile if you're looking for a system with components and software pretuned for optimal gaming performance. The Talon 3.1 may lack a CD-RW drive, and its components are "merely" high-end rather than top-shelf, but it can run today's games at very high frame rates. Serious gamers looking for an excellent gaming-PC value need look no further.

—Denny Atkin

EDITORS' RATING 7.7

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Inexpensive game-optimized PC; knowledgeable support staff

< CONS >

No CD-RW drive; minimal configurability at time of purchase; no software-bundle options; one-year warranty

DIRECT PRICE: \$1,495

< SPECS >

1.13GHz Athlon; 256MB DDR; 20GB hard drive; 16x DVD; 17-inch Optique CRT; nVidia GeForce2 Ultra graphics (64MB DDR); Sound Blaster Live Value; Klipsch ProMedia 2.1 speakers; Ethernet card; Windows Me

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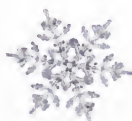


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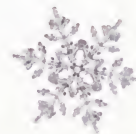
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Best blend of portability and essential features

Mobile Intel Celeron processor 900MHz
13.3" XGA TFT display
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IBM ThinkPad X22

Extra-light, extra-small ultraportable

Mobile Intel Pentium III processor
733MHz featuring Intel SpeedStep™ technology¹⁰
12.1" XGA TFT display
128MB/640MB SDRAM
10GB hard drive
Integrated modem
Integrated Ethernet
Microsoft Windows XP Professional
Lotus SmartSuite Millennium license
3.4 lbs. travel weight
3-year/1-year battery limited warranty

\$1,949

NavCode
26628BU-M250

CUSTOMIZE YOURS:

128MB SDRAM Upgrade
Part #19K4652 \$43

IBM ThinkPad T23

Perfect balance of performance and portability

Mobile Intel Pentium III processor
1.13GHz - M featuring Intel SpeedStep technology
14.1" XGA TFT display
128MB/1GB SDRAM
30GB hard drive
Ultrabay Plus 8X max DVD-ROM
Integrated 802.11b wireless
Integrated modem
Integrated Ethernet
Microsoft Windows XP Professional
Lotus SmartSuite Millennium license
4.6 lbs. travel weight
3-year/1-year battery limited warranty

\$3,049

NavCode
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CUSTOMIZE YOURS:

256MB SDRAM Upgrade
Part #19K4654 \$139

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IBM ThinkPad X22

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Use your Intel processor-based system to share the season's joy with family and friends. Pick up a digital camera, scanner and printer.

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HP 215 Digital Camera

Give this point-and-shoot camera and leave them smiling.

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Scan favorite photos with the touch of a button.

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Print directly from digital cameras without sacrificing print performance.

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Under \$75

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Part #22P5298 **\$69**

Under \$100

IBM Compu-Trolley Carrying Case⁷
Part #33L4877 **\$79.99**

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Part #22P5296 **\$89**

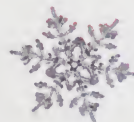
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Part #02K6719 **\$139**

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DESKTOPS

GATEWAY 700C

A Pentium 4 Powerhouse, Fully Loaded and Fast



YOU HAVE TO HAND IT TO GATEWAY'S 2GHZ PENTIUM 4-BASED 700C: It's fast. Even with half the RAM of competing systems and the slow-moving Windows Me operating system, this \$2,629 system scored just shy of the speediest PC we've tested. And its configuration—with plenty of storage and a great sound system—will make gamers and A/V mavens happy.

With its muscular 2GHz Pentium 4 processor, 128MB of RDRAM, 64MB nVidia GeForce3 graphics card, and fast 7,200rpm 80GB hard drive, the 700C posted a sky-high SYSmark 2001 overall score of 163. The 700C kept pace with Dell's 2GHz-based Dimension 8100, and it handily beat similarly configured 1.8GHz Pentium 4 and 1.4GHz Athlon PCs we've tested. By the time you read this, Gateway will be shipping



its 700-series PCs with a minimum of 256MB of RDRAM and Windows XP Home Edition; the 700C will come with these upgrades for the same \$2,629 price. As a result, you can expect even better performance than what our benchmarks gleaned, partly because XP is built around a more streamlined and stable Windows 2000 core.

The 700C is more than just a speed demon; it's also richly configured with a 16x DVD-ROM drive, a 16x/10x/40x CD-RW drive, a 10/100mbps Ethernet adapter, and a 56kbps modem. Our test unit also came with Gateway's FPD1510 15-inch LCD monitor, which offers nearly the same screen area as a 17-inch CRT while using far less energy—something

Californians and others will appreciate these days. For all its benefits, however, the display also added \$200 to the cost of our test system; you could save some money with a standard 19-inch CRT instead. Video fans may also prefer the generally better video playback of CRTs compared with that of LCDs.

Gateway really went all the way for multimedia fans: The Sound Blaster Live sound card and the 4.1 Boston Acoustics BA7500 speakers made for a clear and resonant computer sound system. The sound setup on the otherwise comparable Dimension 8100 isn't quite as nice.

The 700C is an ivory-and-gray midtower system with an easy-open case and easy-to-access front-mounted ports—two

USB, one IEEE 1394 (FireWire). You'll find two more USB ports on the rear panel. The system arrived at our labs neatly assembled, with no cable clutter inside and plenty of open bays for adding hard drives and the like. But with all those components, there's only one free PCI slot available, although with the 700C's USB and IEEE 1394 ports, that's less of a concern,

because most peripherals can attach to one of these ports. Gateway also included a Logitech optical mouse in the package. If you've never used one, you're missing out: Optical mice have no moving parts to clog with dirt and can be used on any smooth surface. That means no more mouse pads, and no more cleaning your mouse ball—ever!

A nice array of software titles comes bundled with the 700C, including Microsoft Works 2001 with Word and Encarta, and some proprietary audio- and video-capture applications. One free year of AOL Internet access is included—a nice touch—as

well as a generous three-year limited warranty that includes one year of onsite service and 24/7 lifetime toll-free support. Before you call, though, you should check out the excellent user guide and online support; they'll probably help you fix the problem yourself.

The only caveat concerning the 700C is its price; even if you opt for a less expensive display, it's still steep. It's rare to see a system, regardless of configuration, that costs much more than \$2,200 these days, unless it's a made-to-order gaming PC. If you're doing heavy-duty number crunching or A/V work, you can probably make do for much less. Still, if you want the best, the Gateway 700C is built to perform.

—Jon L. Jacobi

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >
Very fast; state-of-the-art components; 15.1-inch LCD

< CONS >
Pricey; Windows Me slows performance

DIRECT PRICE: \$2,629

< SPECS >

2GHz Pentium 4; 128MB RDRAM; 80GB hard drive; 16x/10x/40x CD-RW; 15.1-inch Gateway LCD; nVidia GeForce3 graphics (64MB DDR); Sound Blaster Live; Boston Acoustics BA7500 speakers; Ethernet card; Windows Me; Microsoft Works 2001

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The AMD Athlon™ XP processor features QuantiSpeed™ Architecture^a, which boosts overall productivity and enables the ultimate computing experience

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Experience more.

The new AMD Athlon™ XP processor features QuantiSpeed™ Architecture^a. You can now enjoy efficient multitasking when using multiple peripherals, quickly edit home movies, digital photos, boost software performance and burn CDs at lightning speed with fast file downloads. With the new and improved 3DNow! Professional technology, download files and surfing the 'Net while getting Crystal-clear audio enhances digital music and video experiences. Furthermore, you can now make gaming opponents over the 'Net wishing they had an AMD Athlon™ XP processor.



Editors' Choice

^a AMD Athlon XP processor 1600+ operates at a frequency of 1.40GHz
AMD Athlon XP processor 1700+ operates at a frequency of 1.47GHz
AMD Athlon XP processor 1800+ operates at a frequency of 1.53GHz
AMD Athlon XP processor 1900+ operates at a frequency of 1.60GHz

Atlas Xelerator XP

\$619



XP3000

Athlon XP 1600+ Processor

- AMD Athlon XP Processor
- 200/266MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- VIA KT133A PC-133 and 4X AGP Support
- 256MB PC-133 SDRAM
- 40 GB UDMA-100 Hard Drive
- 56X CD-ROM
- Nvidia GEFORCE 2 MX400 3D DVD 64MB
- Motorola PCI 56K V.90 Voice Modem
- PCI 3D Wavetable Stereo Sound
- Atlas 440W 2.1 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Deluxe Windows 98 Keyboard
- Deluxe Mouse w/Wheel
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition
- Sun Micro StarOffice
- AMD Certified Power Supply

Athlon XP 1700+	\$639
Athlon XP 1800+	\$709
Athlon XP 1900+	\$759

\$999



XP6000

Athlon XP 1700+ Processor

- New VIA KT266A DDR Chipset
- 200/266MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- DDR PC1600/2100 and 4X AGP Support
- 256MB PC2100 (266MHz) DDR RAM
- 40 GB UDMA-100 Hard Drive
- 12X DVD-ROM
- Nvidia GEFORCE 2 Titanium 3D DVD 64MB DDR
- Motorola PCI 56K V.90 Voice Modem
- SoundBlaster PCI 128 4-Channel 3D Wavetable
- Altec Lansing AVS500 4.1 Ch Spkrs w/Subwoofer
- 19" 0.25DP OSD Monitor
- Deluxe Windows 98 Keyboard
- Deluxe Mouse w/Wheel
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition
- Sun Micro StarOffice
- 350W AMD Certified Power Supply

Athlon XP 1600+	\$ 979
Athlon XP 1800+	\$1,059
Athlon XP 1900+	\$1,109

\$1,309



XP8000

Athlon XP 1800+ Processor

- New VIA KT266A DDR Chipset
- 200/266MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- DDR PC1600/2100 and 4X AGP Support
- 256MB PC2100 (266MHz) DDR RAM
- 40 GB UDMA-100 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM
- Nvidia GEFORCE 3 Titanium 200 3D DVD 64MB DDR
- Creative Labs Modem Blaster PCI Voice Modem
- SoundBlaster Audigy 5.1 Sound w/SB1394 Firewire port
- Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5300 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Viewsonic E95 19" Monitor
- Microsoft Intelli Internet Keyboard
- Microsoft Intelli Mouse w/Wheel
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition
- Sun Micro StarOffice
- AMD Certified Power Supply

Athlon XP 1600+	\$1,229
Athlon XP 1700+	\$1,249
Athlon XP 1900+	\$1,359

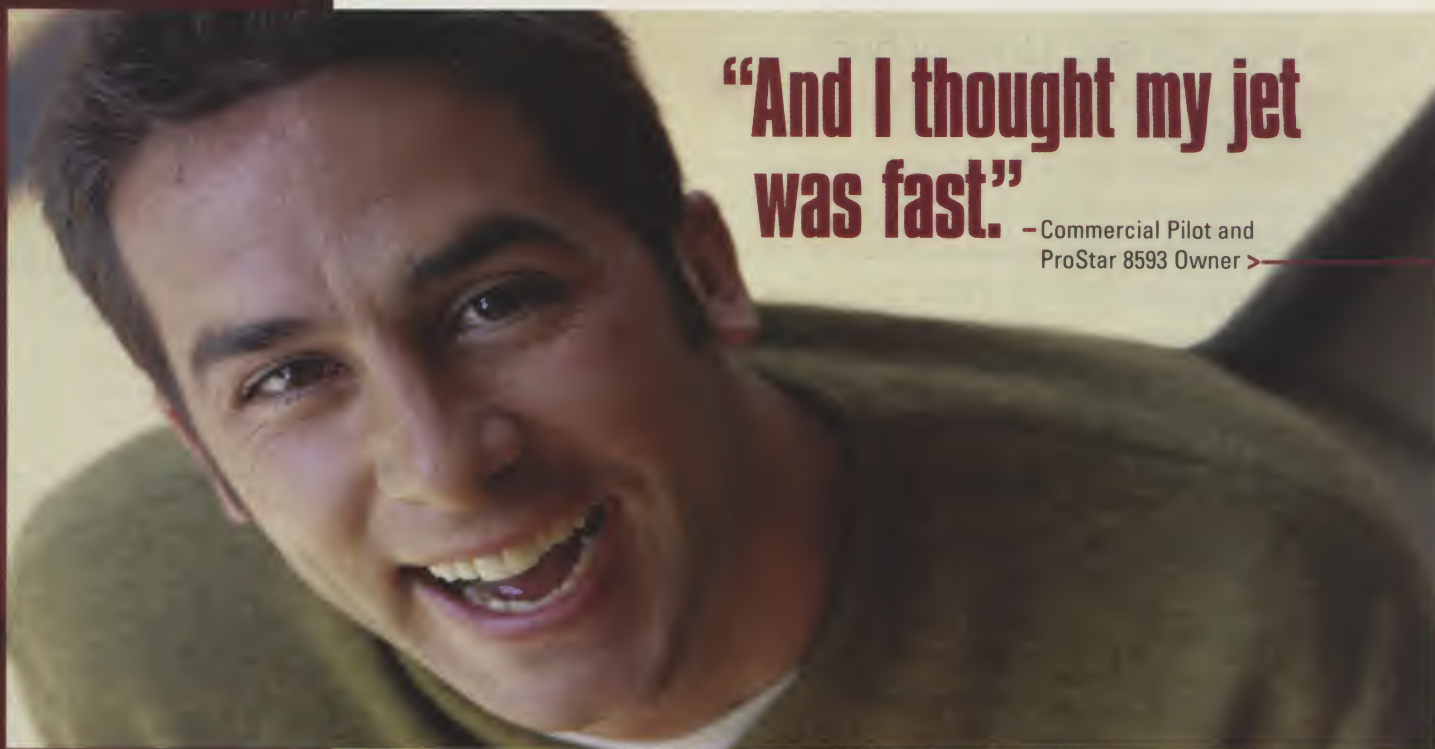


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was fast.”**

— Commercial Pilot and
ProStar 8593 Owner >



8593



Common Features

- > 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 16MB Video Memory
- > Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with opt. Iomega Zip Drive, or 2nd HDD
- > 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > 10/100 Ethernet Lan Adapter
- > 56K Capable V90 Modem
- > 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port & 1 Video-In Port
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter

15" SXGA+ Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz
128MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

\$1645

15" SXGA+ Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
30.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

\$1795

2273



Common Features

- > 512KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Shared Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 10/100 Ethernet Lan Adapter
- > 56K Capable V90 Modem
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot Keys for E-Mail, Browser and API
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.1" w x 10.0" d x 1.48" h

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.13GHz
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
20.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

\$1495

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.26GHz
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
30.0GB Hard Drive⁴
CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive

\$1745

2273



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Shared Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 10/100 Ethernet Lan Adapter
- > 56K Capable V90 Modem
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot Keys for E-Mail, Browser and API
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.1" w x 10.0" d x 1.48" h

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz
128MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive⁴
24X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$1245

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
20.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

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4283



Common Features

- > 512KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 4X ATI M6-P Mobile Radeon 3D Accelerator
- > External 32MB DDR SGRAM Video Memory
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound (SPDIF 5.1CH output for DVD)
- > 2 Built-in Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-in Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem and 10/100 Ethernet
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- > Snap-on color Palm Rest included
- > High Performance Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > 4 USB Ports, 1 IEEE 1394 Port & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1P, Ext. Keyboard, and Ext. CRT
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.28" w x 10.74" d x 1.48" h

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz - M
Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
30.0GB Hard Drive¹
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW/DVD Combo opt.)

\$1795

15" SXGA+ Active Matrix Display
Mobile Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.2GHz - M
Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
512MB 133MHz SDRAM
40.0GB Hard Drive¹
CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive

\$2695

2293



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Share Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem + 10/100 Ethernet
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot Keys for E-Mail, Browser and API
- > 2 USB Ports
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jocks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.1" w x 10.0" d x 1.48" h

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 128MB
100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive¹
24X¹ Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$1095

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology
256MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
20.0GB Hard Drive¹
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

\$1245

5190



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Share Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Sound Effect
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 10/100 Ethernet Lan Adaptor
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 USB Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jocks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Super Slim Notebook: 11" w x 9.4" d x 1.5" h

12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 500MHz
128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive¹
24X¹ Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$945

12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 256MB
100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive¹
24X¹ Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

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Options > Car Adapter > Port Replicator
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HARDWARE

COREX CARDSCAN EXECUTIVE 600C/V6

Cut Through Biz-Card Clutter



WORTH THE MONEY TO ANYONE WHO accumulates mountains of business cards, Corex Technologies' \$299 CardScan Executive 600c/V6 scanner and its enhanced software offer some improved features over earlier Corex models. The 400dpi USB scanner grabs

full-color images of cards quickly, deposits the scanned cards in a flip-down catcher, and sends the images to speedy OCR software on your PC that extracts contact information to a flexible database. At 2.1 inches by 6.7 inches by 4.1 inches (HWD), the scanner is 40 percent smaller than Corex's previous model.

Corex's software lets you sync your address list to the password-protected online CardScan.Net server as easily as to your PDA or PIM. You (or anyone who shares your database) can access and update the information from anywhere with Web access. The software also automatically syncs the



data on your PC with that stored on the Web.

You can seamlessly synchronize the CardScan database with your e-mail software, favorite PIM (such as Act or Lotus Notes/Organizer), or handheld device, including Palm OS and Windows CE/PocketPC models. If you have Openwave Systems' FoneSync Pro software and a cable, you can even drag and drop names and numbers to a compatible cell phone.

It takes just 5 minutes to install the software and link the CardScan scanner to a USB port on your computer and a separate power source. The

unit gobbled up a test collection of 100 business cards in less than 5 minutes, and the software translated the batch into a data file in another 12 minutes.

It took an additional 18 minutes for us to verify and correct all the records onscreen. We had to retype at least some information about 10 percent of the time, but the errors were usually small and easily corrected.

As a specialized product, the Corex CardScan Executive 600c/V6 performs exactly as advertised. It's a fine productivity booster for PIM- or handheld-dependent business users.

—David D. Busch

EDITORS' RATING 8.2

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

One-click sync with handheld or PIM; syncs to online database for worldwide access

< CONS >

Verifying data is time-consuming

MFR. EST. PRICE: \$299

Corex Technologies
800-942-6739
www.cardscan.com

Shopper PriceIt!

3 4 9 2 6

For real-time pricing, go to shopper.com and enter number.

COMPRO PERSONAL CINEMA

The PC and TV Converge at Last

TELEVISION ON YOUR PC IS NOT A NEW THING, BUT PC/TV convergence has had a big history of bloopers. Compro Technologies' new \$199 Personal Cinema is an inexpensive solution that bucks this trend of blunders.

The kit we evaluated came with an nVidia GeForce2 MX 400 graphics card with TwinView dual-display support and a separate TV-tuner box. (Compro also sells Personal Cinema kits with other GeForce cards, including one with a GeForce3.) The GeForce2 board, which performed well in both Direct3D and OpenGL gaming, delivers the high frame rates we've come to expect from the MX 400 chipset.

Unlike ATI's All-in-Wonder Radeon card, which also combines TV options and strong 3D performance, the Personal Cinema uses a stand-alone box for a TV tuner rather than having the tuner plastered to the graphics card. This means there's nothing to block adjacent slots, a concern with newer motherboards and

their paucity of PCI slots.

About the size of a PDA, the Compro tuner is powered by its connection to the MX 400. Along with an antenna and stereo-audio-output ports conveniently located at the rear, it features separate composite and S-Video input and output ports for connecting to other devices.

Installation is straightforward enough, although the documentation is scanty. The simple-to-use WinDVR software links to InterVideo's Web-based Electronic Programming Guide (EPG), enabling you to deftly transform your system into a TiVo-style digital VCR. Video capture is supported too; the bundled MGI Video-



Wave 4.0 can help you assemble your captured clips into movies. Picture quality is excellent, and the card has plenty of capture formats and frame rates for a wide mix of needs.

We haven't managed to get much work done while watching television on our PC, but that's our fault, not the Personal Cinema's. Considering the relatively small premium the TV-tuner box adds to a GeForce-card purchase, the Compro Personal Cinema is a great graphics value.

—Bill O'Brien

EDITORS' RATING 7.6

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Competitive 3D performance; external TV tuner; assemble-editing capability; electronic program scheduling

< CONS >

Slim documentation

DIRECT PRICE: \$199

Compro Technology
510-668-0380
www.comprousa.com

Shopper PriceIt!

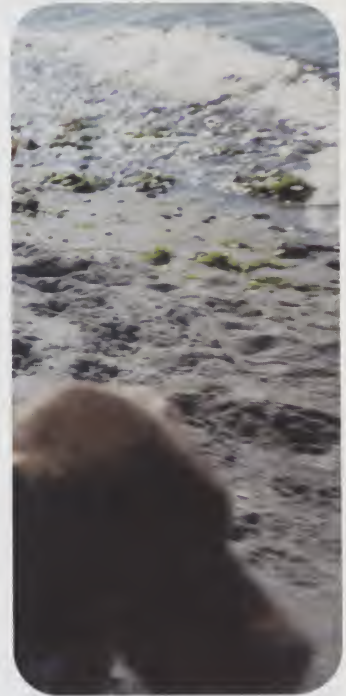
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HARDWARE

RICOH RDC-i700

Do Wireless Tricks With Digital Pics

HYBRIDIZATION HAS GIVEN US SUCH WONDERS AS the clock radio, the toaster oven, and the peanut-butter cup. Now there's Ricoh's \$1,299 RDC-i700. It's a full-featured 3.3-megapixel camera with a 3x optical zoom lens that's great at catching extreme close-ups, but what truly distinguishes this digi-cam are its potential wireless capabilities: You can check e-mail, browse the Web, or snap an image and immediately upload it to a server, all directly from the camera.

The RDC-i700 has a 3.5-inch touch-screen display and a PC Card slot, and includes digicam features we've come to expect, including auto bracketing, motion-picture recording, continuous shooting, and sound recording. Although the RDC-i700 fared well overall in our image-quality tests, some of the shots showed slight chromatic aberrations along the borders separating contrasting colors. Also, sometimes it was difficult getting the correct white balance. Image



quality was certainly acceptable for a high-end camera, but we were more impressed with the sharp close-ups in Macro mode.

The well-placed controls allow you to make most adjustments without turning on the display. The monochrome LCD panel on the top of the camera lets you work with the screen turned off to preserve the battery, but the viewfinder is small and supplies little information. The color display, on the other hand, includes detailed information on shot settings, and the RDC-i700's graphical user interface is easy to use.

To use this camera wirelessly, you'll need to outfit the camera with a wireless modem and subscribe to a wireless service. We tested the RDC-i700 with a Ricochet GS modem. Although the RDC-i700 maintained a stable connection, page-load speeds for Web browsing were slow. The camera doesn't support 802.11b or Bluetooth cards, but Ricoh is about to release an OS upgrade with support for Sprint's AirCard 510 CDMA modem.

The camera's high price and the added cost of mobile services will place the RDC-i700 out of the reach of many. Nonetheless, it's an intriguing option for picture-snapping field workers in professions such as insurance or real estate.

—Allen Fear

EDITORS' RATING 7.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Web browser; e-mail client; touch-screen display; PC Card slot

< CONS >

Expensive; small viewfinder

DIRECT PRICE: \$1,299

Ricoh

800-725-7767

www.ricoh-usa.com

Shopper PriceIt!

3 4 9 0 0

For real-time pricing, go to shopper.com and enter number.

SONIGISTIX MONSOON MH-505
FLAT PANEL SURROUND SYSTEM

A Storm of Sound At a Soothing Price



NO ONE HAS EVER SOLD A HIGH-QUALITY 5.1-channel speaker system for much below \$200, so we doubted that a vendor noted for pricey, no-holds-barred audiophile solutions would be the first. To our surprise, Sonigistix's \$179 MH-505 Flat Panel Surround System,

although it doesn't match the near-perfect output of the company's top-of-the-line MM-1000 and MM-2000 flat-panel systems, does produce stunningly immersive sound that's unprecedented for the price.

Unlike the company's flagship products, which use a single low-mass flat-panel driver to reproduce all high-end and midrange frequencies, the MH-505's four satellites each combine a smaller 3-by-5-inch flat-panel tweeter with a conventional 2.5-inch cone driver. The front-center unit contains only a single 2.5-inch cone, which is workable because this channel is used for speech. The bass unit is equipped



with a front-firing 5.25-inch cone.

We were less impressed with Sonigistix's other cost-saving decisions. Our biggest disappointment was the lack of a built-in multi-channel decoder. This increases noise levels, and it renders the MH-505 incompatible with all but the few sound cards that offer at least four channels of analog outputs. Also, the speakers' dynamic range is somewhat limited, occasionally clipping or becoming muddy at high volume levels. And Sonigistix offers floor stands, but they must be purchased separately for \$99—more than half the cost of the entire speaker system.

But these are minor complaints. At

moderate listening levels, the MH-505's high end and midrange rival those of the company's finest offerings, and the jaw-dropping three-dimensional imaging could be the best we've heard from a set of 5.1 desktop speakers. The bass unit isn't as loud, deep, or detailed as some larger models, but it still produces convincing output.

The MH-505 may not advance the state of the art, but at anything less than the highest output levels, it's one of the more transparent, detailed, and accurate 5.1 offerings on the market. At under \$200, it's a steal.

—Don Labriola

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Low price; superb imaging; stunning detail, transparency

< CONS >

No multichannel decoder; limited dynamic range; no floor stands

DIRECT PRICE: \$179

Sonigistix

877-722-8346

www.monsoonaudio.com

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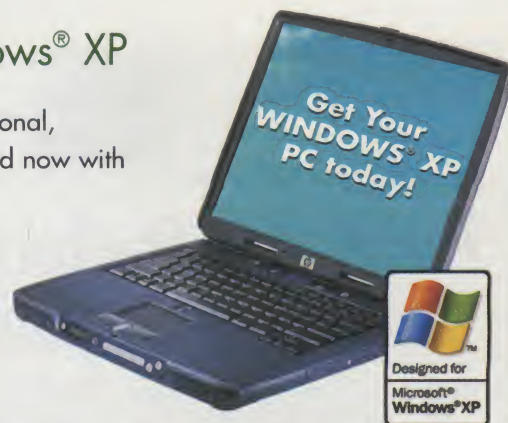
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MOBILE

DELL INSPIRON 8100

Race-Car Performance In a Sedan-Size Chassis

THE \$2,291 INSPIRON 8100 IS DELL'S FIRST NOTEBOOK BASED ON Intel's new Pentium III-M (formerly Tualatin) mobile processor, a low-voltage CPU that's designed to extend battery life without sacrificing speed. The Pentium III-M competes with other emerging low-voltage processors, including AMD's Mobile Athlon 4, but does it actually deliver? Based on our tests, it does on speed, but battery life was satisfactory rather than stunning. The Inspiron 8100 offers more than just a new CPU, however. It's packed with all the features demanding mobile users have come to expect from a leading-edge notebook, including a spacious 15-inch display, at a reasonable price.

The Inspiron 8100 we tested came with a blazingly fast 1.13GHz Pentium III-M chip and Windows 2000 installed. (Windows XP will ship with the system by the time you read this.) While its 128MB of memory is now the minimum for a high-end notebook, in our tests the Inspiron 8100 was 14 percent faster than a 1GHz IBM ThinkPad A22p equipped with 256MB of RAM and similar graphics and hard drive specs. The Inspiron was also 32 percent faster than the 1GHz Athlon-based HP Pavilion n5470, which had 256MB of RAM to its advantage, but which was also hobbled by a mere 8MB of graphics RAM and the poky Windows Me operating system.

The Inspiron 8100's battery life wowed us less than its speed did, but the notebook's battery still did well considering the size of the screen it had to power. Battery life fell 8 minutes shy of 3 hours, which is enough for a mix of work and play after your rubber-chicken meal on a coast-to-coast flight.

As any frequent flyer knows, you need to consider more than just speed when purchasing a notebook. For instance, can you run for a plane with the Inspiron 8100 hanging from your shoulder? Maybe, if you work out. It weighs a hefty 7.9 pounds (8.9 pounds including the power supply) and measures 13 inches wide, 10.8 inches deep, and more than 1.8 inches thick.



What you get in exchange for the achy shoulder, however, is enough room for a lot of hardware, including a bright, crisp, and saturated 15-inch LCD powered by nVidia's GeForce2 Go chipset and 16MB of video memory. The LCD's default resolution is 1,400 by 1,050, which means typefaces appear crisper, and you can fit a lot more onto the screen. On the other hand, some may find the resolution makes the view look too small and cramped, but opting for big icons in the video settings will help.

The well-packed Inspiron 8100 includes a 20GB hard drive, a fixed 8x DVD drive, and a hot-swappable bay containing a

floppy drive.

(Options for the bay include a \$179 8x/4x/24x CD-RW, a \$249 Zip drive, and a \$99 battery.) The Inspiron 8100 also has two Type II PC Card slots (usable with one Type III device); modem, Ethernet, and infrared-communication ports; an IEEE 1394 (FireWire) port; one PS/2 (keyboard/mouse) port; and two USB ports.

The stereo speakers, located above the keyboard on the sides of the notebook, offer decent sound quality and volume range. DVDs play beautifully.

The Inspiron 8100 is also comfortable to use, with big keys that don't wobble, your choice of touch pad or pointing stick for navigating onscreen, and two sets of easy-to-click buttons. Microsoft Office XP Small Business anchored the software bundle on our test system.

Dell does pretty well on the extras, too. The printed documentation consists of a setup poster and a guide that covers a few basics such as connecting a printer and troubleshooting. The full story is available on Dell's Web site, which you can jump to using a button above the keyboard. If you don't find

what you need online, you can call Dell's toll-free support line 24/7 during the too-short one-year warranty period.

The Inspiron 8100 provides plenty of power and features to satisfy any user who wants it all in one portable package. The notebook is versatile and comfortable to use, too—except for its heft, which may deter some frequent flyers. The short one-year warranty is a disappointment; whether you extend the warranty or hire support staff, providing for the notebook's later years will cost you. But if you have that covered, the Inspiron 8100 is otherwise a well-rounded desktop replacement.

—Dan Littman

EDITORS' RATING 7.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Great performance; inexpensive; well-equipped; GeForce2 Go graphics

< CONS >

Heavy; short warranty

DIRECT PRICE: \$2,291

< SPECS >

1.13GHz Pentium III-M; 128MB SDRAM; 20GB hard drive; 8x DVD; 15-inch TFT; Ethernet port; Windows 2000; Microsoft Office XP Small Business

Dell Computer
800-388-8542
www.dell.com

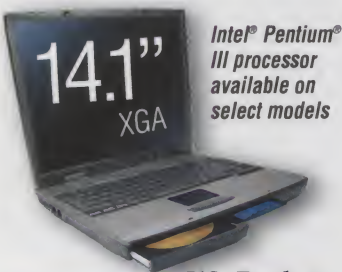
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MOBILE**GATEWAY SOLO 1200**

A Well-Equipped Notebook At a So-Low Price

FOR SLIGHTLY LESS THAN \$1,000, THE GATEWAY SOLO 1200 PACKS A surprising amount of punch into its sporty, 6.8-pound frame. In addition to an active-matrix screen—a rarity in notebooks with sub-\$1,000 prices—the Solo 1200 offers amenities such as built-in Ethernet support and a three-spindle design. The 750MHz Celeron-based notebook is also a respectable performer, making it a compelling choice for cash-strapped students and budget-minded professionals. (By the time you read this, the notebook will come with an 800MHz Celeron for the same price.)

Historically, notebooks at the bottom of the pricing scale have been rife with compromises: slow processors, little memory, small hard drives, and dual-scan screens. The Solo 1200 is at the front of a new wave of systems that come with not only TFT displays but also ample processing power, RAM, and storage. Make no mistake: This is not a notebook for filtering big Photoshop images or carting giant databases, but it's more than adequately equipped for mainstream work and play.

To that end, Gateway supplies a 10/100Mbps Ethernet adapter and a V.92 modem; both are integrated. The Solo 1200's bright, uniform 12.1-inch screen can display 32-bit color at its native 1,024-by-768-pixel resolution and offers 16-bit color at its maximum 1,600-by-1,200 resolution on an external display. Those are good specs for an entry-level notebook, even though the S3 Graphics Twister video chip usurps 8MB of the notebook's 128MB of RAM. Fortunately, the impact on overall performance is minimal, and you can even increase the graphics-memory allotment to 16MB or 32MB in the Solo 1200's BIOS if you choose. The Twister isn't a bleeding-edge graphics chip, but we were able to play Unreal Tournament at 800-by-600 resolution while maintaining a high frame rate. In fact, the Twister chipset delivers better Quake III Arena frame rates than machines equipped with faster CPUs but



using the Intel 815 chipset for graphics.

Unfortunately, the system could not run our SYSmark 2001 tests that provide application-performance information. (SYSmark's installation routine and runtime scripts are complex, however, so this is not unusual.) The Solo 1200 did complete our Photoshop test suite, which took 20 minutes and 15 seconds—a couple of minutes faster than the 500MHz Apple iBook, but slower than similarly configured Windows-based systems we've tested.

The battery proves to be the real disappointment, though. With a duration of just over an hour and a half, the unit's battery life demonstrates why lithium-ion battery technology has almost universally

replaced the nickel-metal-hydrate technology the Solo 1200 uses. It's clear this notebook will work better for someone who only occasionally needs to be away from a power outlet.

A scroll rocker sandwiched between the two touch-pad buttons makes navigating Web pages and long documents easier—every notebook should have one. The Solo 1200

also has four programmable buttons above the keyboard that can launch apps or Net access, although we don't like their proximity to the power button, which activates sleep mode. As for the keyboard itself, it's comfortable, but we dislike having to hold down a function key to use the volume and mute controls (which reside on the Home and PgUp/PgDn keys). We prefer stand-alone volume controls.

The Solo 1200 dispenses with serial and PS/2 ports, supplying a pair of USB ports in their stead. It does have a parallel connector for legacy printers. The notebook comes with fixed floppy and CD-ROM drives, and Gateway offers no drive upgrades for this model, even at the time of order. That's regrettable, as we'd gladly pay a few extra dollars for DVD. The 10GB hard drive is an Ultra ATA/100 model.

Maximum system RAM is 320MB.

Our evaluation model came with Windows Me installed, but Gateway includes a coupon that lets customers upgrade to Windows XP for \$15 when it becomes available. Gateway also provides Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Norton AntiVirus, and its own excellent QuickAnswers help/information guide. It's a generous mix of software for such an inexpensive system.

Indeed, few things about the Gateway Solo 1200 say, "Well, what did you expect for \$999?" It's a surprisingly well-equipped notebook that has plenty of points other than price in its favor, although battery life isn't one of them.

—Rick Broida

EDITORS' RATING 7.5

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Rock-bottom price; TFT screen; solid performance; good software

< CONS >

Poor battery life; no CD-RW or DVD upgrades; clunky volume control

DIRECT PRICE: \$999

< SPECS >

750MHz Celeron; 128MB SDRAM; 10GB hard drive; 24x CD; 12.1-inch TFT; Ethernet port; Windows Me; Microsoft Works Suite 2001; additional software

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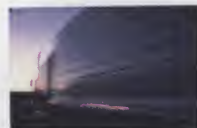
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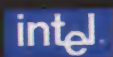
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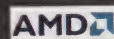
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MOBILE

HP OMNIBOOK 6100

Real Horsepower For Road Warriors



HEWLETT-PACKARD'S OMNIBOOK BRAND MAY SAY "BUSINESS BEFORE pleasure," but the powerful, well-designed HP Omnibook 6100 will let you zip through your business and leave plenty of time left over for fun. HP made all the right decisions when putting together this \$3,699 two-spindle desktop-replacement notebook—except, perhaps, by making it too expensive for those who'll want it.

Rather than having the Omnibook do one thing best, HP settles for it doing everything well. It integrates the latest technology, including a 1.13GHz Pentium III-M CPU and an ATI Mobility Radeon graphics chipset. The combination delivers desktop-level application performance and a gameworthy 64.2 frames per second on Quake III Arena. The Omnibook 6100 may not lead the field in the mobile-3D-graphics category (that honor belongs to the Dell Inspiron 8100, which relies on nVidia's GeForce2 Go hardware), but it should deliver more than enough speed to satisfy both sides of your brain.

This machine upholds HP's tradition of excellent battery life. At 4 hours and 22 minutes, the Omnibook 6000 is bested by few notebooks apart from Apple iBooks. And though it weighs 6.5 pounds, the Omnibook 6100 is still lighter than most of its competitors

with 14.1-inch displays, while packing a big, bright 15-inch one. (HP offers a 14.1-inch screen option as well.) Some, however, may find the display's 1,400-by-1,050-pixel resolution hard to read; you'll want to be sure to select large icons in the display settings.

The Omnibook 6100 includes built-in 802.11b networking, a generous 30GB hard drive, and HP's presentation-mode feature, which sets up the system for an external display and launches PowerPoint at the touch of a button. All this makes the notebook suitable for both school and business. You can turn the wireless networking on or off via an external button—a nice power-saving touch—and the fairly transparent WiFi implementation dropped and reacquired the network connection with no problem as we roamed the floor.



No matter which side you're on regarding the issue of pointing stick versus touch pad, the Omnibook 6100 has you covered. It comes with both, including separate sets of buttons for each, as well as a big sleep-mode button and three programmable buttons for one-touch application launching. This makes it ideal for use in a situation—such as a large enterprise or a family with multiple users—where the notebook must be shared. And we definitely like its keyboard, which has a good layout and springy keys.

A press-in, slide-forward latch located on the side of the system pops a swappable drive out of the bay. Our evaluation unit came with a DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive, but you can put a variety of options in the bay, including a second battery or a

cheaper form of optical storage such as a CD-ROM, CD-RW, or DVD drive. The combo drive plays DVDs well, although not without a display glitch or two, and you can pump up the volume on the speakers loud enough to be able to hear movies. The sound does become somewhat distorted at maximum volume, however. The Omnibook 6100 also provides volume controls,

including an all-too-rare mute button, that remain accessible when the lid is closed.

HP tops off the package with a three-year parts-and-labor warranty (another feature that's becoming increasingly rare), which you can upgrade with one, two, or three years of onsite service for a reasonable fee. Although HP's lack of a toll-free technical-support number continues to be a sticking point, overall HP's is a solid service-and-support offering.

The Omnibook line is designed with corporate IT departments in mind; HP's Pavilion line is designed for consumers. This means

Omnibooks are a little more rugged, and design choices tend to be more conservative. IT departments want rock-solid drivers and reliability above all else. For prospective purchasers, though, this means the Omnibook 6100 is likely to be a long-lived, trouble-free notebook. That's one reason why HP can provide a three-year standard warranty, rather than the one-year standard warranty offered with its Pavilion consumer notebooks.

If it had infrared and IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports, we would have rated the Omnibook 6100 slightly higher. And we have some doubts about the durability of the latch—it just feels as if it's going to lose its spring too soon. But overall, the pricey HP Omnibook 6100 strikes us as a prime example of notebook design done right.

—Lori Grunin

EDITORS' RATING 7.8

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Long battery life; comfortable keyboard; built-in wireless networking; light for its class

< CONS >

Expensive; no infrared or IEEE 1394 ports

DIRECT PRICE: \$3,699

< SPECS >

1.13GHz Pentium III-M; 256MB SDRAM; 30GB hard drive; DVD/CD-RW combo drive (4x/4x/24x CD, 8x DVD); 15-inch TFT; Ethernet port; Windows 2000; McAfee Office

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MOBILE**COMPAQ IPAQ PERSONAL AUDIO PLAYER PA-2**

Magnificently Mobile MP3s

WITH ITS STURDY, COMPACT DESIGN, UPGRADED headphones, and 14-hour-plus battery life, Compaq's iPaq Personal Audio Player PA-2 may be the ideal workout companion. The PA-2 lacks an FM tuner, a voice recorder, rechargeable batteries, and other niceties available with less svelte competitors, however.

Like its predecessor the PA-1, the new \$199.99-direct PA-2 has no onboard memory, storing audio files in two MultiMediaCard flash-RAM slots, including one that houses a supplied 64MB card. The player also uses the same minuscule case as its forebear, with an aluminum front, a molded plastic back with a detachable clip, and two rubberized side grips to assist with sweaty-hands operation.

On the software front, Compaq dropped the RioPort Audio Manager in favor of the basic edition of Musicmatch's Jukebox for MP3 audio and Microsoft Windows Media Player 7.0 for creating Windows Media Audio (WMA)

files. The unit also supports Advanced Audio Coding (AAC), but support for the Audible audio-book file format is still missing, as is a bookmarking feature.

USB download times remain frustratingly slow, even though the player's file-transfer test results weren't as poor as the PA-1's. Once our music was onboard, however, we found the controls intuitive. A large play/pause button is surrounded by much smaller fast-forward, reverse, and volume controls, so you can operate the PA-2 without looking at it.

Compaq improved the audio quality

when it dropped the PA-1's earbud-style headphones in favor of a foldable, over-the-head unit that stays firmly in place but is also comfortable, even during vigorous activity. Our AAA batteries produced a remarkable 15.5-hour battery life in informal testing, exceeding Compaq's 14-hour rating.

By not trying to be all things to all people, Compaq's PA-2 is exceptionally well-suited for its target market: users who want portable tunes for working out and similar activities. If you're in this group, you'll be pleased with the PA-2.

—Jan Ozer

**EDITORS' RATING 6.8**

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Small, light; long battery life

< CONS >

Few features; slow file transfers

DIRECT PRICE: \$199.99Compaq Computer
800-345-1518www.compaq.com/ipaq**Shopper PriceIt!**

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For real-time pricing, go to shopper.com and enter number.**AUDIBLE ADVISOR**

Stock Your Visor With Audible Books

RATHER THAN LISTENING TO MUSIC WHILE YOU exercise or commute, listen to a book instead. Audible's spoken-audio content, including best-sellers, backlist titles, newspapers, magazines, and unique recordings, is finally available for Handspring Visor PDAs. The Audible Advisor, a \$129 Springboard module created by Card Access, is designed to deliver Audible's content via the popular PDA's Springboard slot. Plugging it in gives you access and playback rights to Audible's reasonably priced audio content.

To install, just pop the Audible Advisor into the Visor's Springboard slot, and it's ready to go. You'll also have to load software onto the PDA's host PC while connected to the Internet and activate the connected Visor with the Audible Advisor inserted. After registration and activation you're ready to start downloading content—for a fee, of course.

You select and buy titles on the Audible Web site, then download them to your PC in the appropriate format. A spoken version of *Bridget Jones' Diary* lasting 3 hours and 19 minutes is a 12MB download in the Audible format. To hear content on your Visor, you transfer it to the Advisor, a process controlled from the host PC with the Visor connected to it.

The Audible Advisor's 16MB storage capacity is adequate for most round-trip commutes, holding about 5 hours of spoken content. You'll need to take along a host

notebook PC for adding new content

if you take it on a trip, however.

Audio quality is excellent, with good volume, clear voices, and minimal background noise. But the earbuds' standard stereo mini-plug doesn't stay securely in the headset port—a problem with the port, not the earbud jack. If you don't move around much, the connection is fine, however.

Audible's audio content will definitely fill the hours while you commute or exercise—that is, if you can keep the earbud jack in the port and don't mind carrying only 5 hours of audio at once.

—Bruce Brown

**EDITORS' RATING 6.5**

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Easy to use; broad content

< CONS >

Limited storage; loose headset connector

DIRECT PRICE: \$129.99; fees for content varyCard Access
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MOBILE**SONY CLIÉ PEG-S320**

Practical Palmtop, Sensible Price

WHEN IT COMES TO HANDHELDS, A LOT CAN change in a year, but Sony's new monochrome CLIÉ PDA, the PEG-S320, is more evolutionary than revolutionary. This \$199.99 handheld offers a sleeker design, a few tweaks, and an affordable price.

The case of this new model resembles that of the high-end, smart-looking CLIÉ PEG-N610C, jog dial and all. Sony has kept the cost of the unit down by building the handheld around a silver-tone hard-plastic case and a monochrome display.

Still, the PEG-S320 can go toe-to-toe with more expensive PDAs such as Palm's \$329 m500, which also runs version 4.0 of the Palm OS on a 33MHz DragonBall VZ processor with 8MB of RAM. This model's 4MB of flash ROM allows you to upgrade the OS later on. Cradles and other accessories will work with all models in the CLIÉ line.



The CLIÉ does have some notable shortfalls. The PDA has a Memory Stick slot, but Sony doesn't include a Memory Stick in the box. Also, the unit lacks a dust cover for the empty Memory Stick slot, a strange omission. And Memory Sticks can be used only for storage; Handspring's competing Visor Deluxe can accept memory cartridges, as well as digital-camera and MP3-player modules, in its Springboard slot.

Included in the box is a USB sync cable and a power cable for recharging the lithium-ion battery. No cradle is included, how-

ever, and you can't plug in the cable and the charger simultaneously. Also, though this CLIÉ has a nylon flip cover similar to the one found on more expensive CLIÉ models, it lacks a latch and tends to flop around.

Anyone using Windows 95, Windows NT, or a Mac will want to avoid the CLIÉ because it won't sync with these desktop operating systems. Mac users can buy third-party software to bridge this gap, however.

The Sony CLIÉ PEG-S320 is one solid PDA, but we prefer the Palm m500's sleeker design and the Visor's Springboard slot. Nonetheless, the unit's sharp display and budget-friendly price make it a smart pick.

—Darren Gladstone

EDITORS' RATING	8.0
RATED 1 TO 10	
< PROS > Affordable; sleek design	
< CONS > No cover latch; no bundled Mac support, Memory Stick	
DIRECT PRICE: \$199.99	
Sony Electronics 877-760-7669 www.sony.com/clié	
Shopper PriceIt! 3 4 8 5 4	
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MOTOROLA TIMEPORT 270C

A Bluetooth Phone For Power Users

FOR THE PHONE POWER USER, MOTOROLA'S \$249 Timeport 270c offers a durable, full-size, candy-bar-style phone with a large, sharp display and business-oriented features. Apart from its bulky frame and hefty price, this solid phone leaves you wanting for little.

The trimode (CDMA 800/1900/AMPS 800) 270c has a high-resolution (128-by-100-pixel) screen, displaying up to six lines of text. The 4.7-ounce silver phone has a slightly convex face to keep your skin's oils from sullyng the screen. We found the design comfortable on the ear.

One praiseworthy feature is the phone's joystick-like navigational button. Also, the phone's buttons are rubberized, giving them a pleasing feel. It has no dedicated button for launching the wireless Web, but does have one for activating the speakerphone.

The 270c's interface is straightforward, and while this model isn't Java-enabled, it

does have standard features such as Caller ID and call history, as well as a 400-number phone book, 32 unique ring tones (plus a vibrate function), voice-activated dialing for up to 20 names, and a voice-recording feature. It's also two-way-SMS-capable and can sync with popular PIMs, such as Microsoft Outlook, using an optional software/cable package. For early adopters, Motorola is offering a \$299 Bluetooth kit, which includes a Bluetooth transceiver for the phone and a Bluetooth PC Card for your laptop.



We managed to get almost five days of standby time and 3.4 hours of talk time. (Motorola claims 9.4 days and 3.9 hours, respectively.) Call quality was generally good on Verizon's New York City network, and we rarely had to extend the antenna. The sound quality of the speakerphone is high.

The Motorola Timeport 270c didn't leave us head-over-heels smitten, but we found a lot to like. Its sharp display, lengthy battery life, ample features, sturdy design, and abundance of optional accessories make it a good choice for power users.

—David Carnoy

EDITORS' RATING	7.4
RATED 1 TO 10	
< PROS > Large, sharp display; respectable battery life; built-in speakerphone	
< CONS > Slightly bulky; expensive	
MFR. EST. PRICE: \$249	
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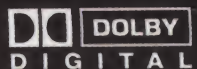


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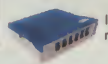
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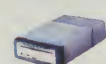
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\$1059

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- upgrade: MS Optical Intelli-Mouse @ \$27
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Intel Pentium 4 1.6 GHZ	\$1059	(dvdspp121)
Intel Pentium 4 1.7 GHZ	\$1089	(dvdspp122)
Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHZ	\$1129	(dvdspp123)
Intel Pentium 4 1.9 GHZ	\$1149	(dvdspp124)
Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHZ	\$1249	(dvdspp125)
Intel Pentium 4 2.2 GHZ	\$1449	(dvdspp126)



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- 56K V.90 Modem w/Voice
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\$769

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- upgrade: 19" ViewSonic E95 22mm @ \$169
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- upgrade: S.B. Live Value 5.1 Sound Card @ \$39
- 56K V.90 Fax Modem w/Voice
- MS Windows XP Home Edition CD
- One Year On-Site Warranty - add \$39

Intel Pentium 4 1.5 GHZ	\$769	(vasp121)
Intel Pentium 4 1.6 GHZ	\$799	(vasp122)
Intel Pentium 4 1.7 GHZ	\$829	(vasp123)
Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHZ	\$869	(vasp124)
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- AC-97 Stereo 3D Sound
- upgrade: S.B. Live Value 5.1 Sound Card @ \$39
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- MS Windows XP Home Edition CD
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- One Year On-Site Warranty - add \$39

Intel Pentium 4 1.6 GHZ	\$1249	(pssp121)
Intel Pentium 4 1.7 GHZ	\$1279	(pssp122)
Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHZ	\$1319	(pssp123)
Intel Pentium 4 1.9 GHZ	\$1339	(pssp124)
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\$1039

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- PS/2 Mouse & Win98 Keyboard
- MS Windows XP Home Edition CD
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Intel Pentium 4 1.6 GHZ	\$1039	(chsp121)
Intel Pentium 4 1.7 GHZ	\$1069	(chsp122)
Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHZ	\$1109	(chsp123)
Intel Pentium 4 1.9 GHZ	\$1129	(chsp124)
Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHZ	\$1229	(chsp125)
Intel Pentium 4 2.2 GHZ	\$1429	(chsp126)

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- 19" ViewSonic E95 SVGA Monitor, 22mm
- upgrade: 19" ViewSonic GS790 22mm @ \$99
- 7 Pieces 1000 Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- PS/2 Mouse & Win98 Keyboard
- MS Windows XP Home Edition CD
- Free Corel Office 2002 CD
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Intel Pentium 4 1.6 GHZ	\$1509	(supsp121)
Intel Pentium 4 1.7 GHZ	\$1539	(supsp122)
Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHZ	\$1579	(supsp123)
Intel Pentium 4 1.9 GHZ	\$1599	(supsp124)
Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHZ	\$1699	(supsp125)
Intel Pentium 4 2.2 GHZ	\$1899	(supsp126)

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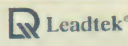
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2.0GHz
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1.9GHz
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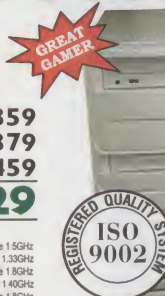
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 Altec Lansing AVS-500 5spkr. sound system
 19" .26 N.I. Digital Monitor

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 AMD Athlon™XP processor 1900+⁵ **\$1199**

AMD Athlon™XP processor 1800+⁴ **\$1159**



¹QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.5GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.33GHz.
²QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.6GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.40GHz.
⁴QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.8GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.50GHz.
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 Creative Labs SB Live! 5.1 Digital
 Deluxe ATX Tower Case
 Altec Lansing AVS-500 5spkr. sound system
 17" .27 N.I. Digital Monitor

AMD Athlon™XP processor
 AMD Athlon™XP processor 1500+¹ **\$909**
 AMD Athlon™XP processor 1600+² **\$929**
 AMD Athlon™XP processor 1700+³ **\$959**

AMD Athlon™XP processor 1800+⁴ **\$1019**



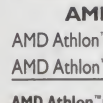
¹QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.5GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.33GHz.
²QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.6GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.40GHz.
³QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.7GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.47GHz.
⁴QuantiSpeed™ architecture outperforms competitive 1.8GHz processors. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.50GHz.

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AMD Athlon™ processor
 AMD Athlon™ processor 1GHz **\$729**
 AMD Athlon™ processor 1.2GHz **\$749**

AMD Athlon™ processor 1.4GHz **\$779**

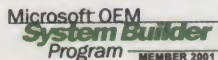


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 Iomega 100MB ZIP Drive Int. IDE45
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 MS Office XP Small Business Edition ..175
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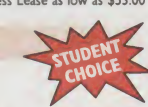


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1GHz \$689



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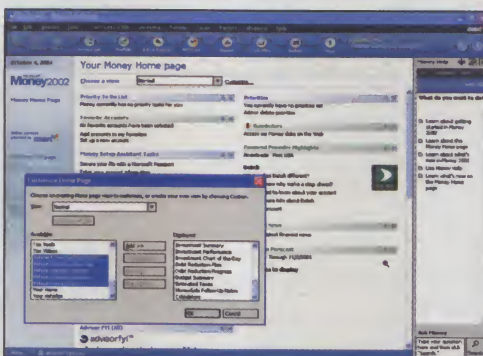
Microsoft Wants to Show You the Money



MICROSOFT MONEY 2002 DELUXE BUILDS ON Money's previous strengths, adding incremental improvements. The program includes strong setup tools, great Web integration, and excellent planning tools—all of which put it slightly ahead of Intuit's Quicken for new users—but you won't find any must-have new features.

Money 2002 comes in four versions: Standard (\$34.95 before a \$10 rebate), Deluxe (\$64.95 before a \$20 rebate), Deluxe & Business (\$84.95 before a \$20 rebate), and Suite (\$94.95 before a \$20 rebate). We tested the Deluxe version, which adds tools for investment management and financial planning not included in Standard.

Money does a fine job of managing checking accounts, monitoring investments, creating and tracking budgets, and developing financial plans. The intuitive menus logically arrange tools and features into categories. You'll also find features grouped into financial centers, such as Accounts & Bills, Investing, Planning, and Taxes. To help first-timers,



Money includes a first-rate setup interview.

The program makes banking easier by connecting with financial institutions and downloading the latest account data in the background—even when Money isn't running. A new feature uses this data to enter missing transactions and reconcile bank statements automatically, so you don't need to manually enter ATM debit slips.

Money syncs with MSN Money (formerly MoneyCentral), a Web site where you can view your portfolio from any device with Internet access. You can even make changes, such as stock purchases, which are reflected both on the Web site and on your desktop PC.

Although Money does a decent job of

managing portfolios, it's lacking in sophistication.

Additionally, it doesn't integrate with Intuit's TurboTax, the top tax-preparation program. Money users who want to do their own taxes must use Kiplinger's less capable TaxCut instead. Money is the better choice, however, if you're new to personal-finance programs, or if you primarily need help staying on a budget and putting your finances on firmer footing.

—Wayne Kawamoto

EDITORS' RATING 7.9

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Strong planning tools; solid integration with Web features

< CONS >

Doesn't integrate with TurboTax; lacks high-end investment tools

DIRECT PRICE: \$64.95
(before a \$20 rebate)

< REQUIRES >

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WINZIP 8.1 (BETA)

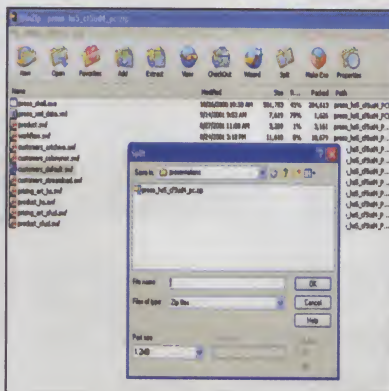
A File Zipper That's a Winner



WINZIP 8.1 (BETA) IS A FULL-FEATURED COMPRESSION utility with a strong pedigree. WinZip's developers recognized the need for new features that actually make a difference, and the result is an indispensable compression utility. Both Windows Me and XP feature a built-in utility for file compression, but if your needs are anything more than rudimentary, you'll want a more powerful program, and WinZip is the answer.

Version 8.1 significantly increases WinZip's integration with Windows Explorer, including the customization of the right-click menus on any Zip file, the selection of multiple Zip files for extraction, and the extraction of Zip archives to specified folders.

A feature called Zip and Email Plus is among the program's most useful additions. It not only attaches the selected Zip file to a message using your default e-mail program, but also brings up a small dialog box that lets you rename the file and



password-protect the attachment.

Recent versions of WinZip have included an Install selection on the Actions menu when the Zip archive contains a setup or install program. This useful feature has now been added to the WinZip wizard. A new feature also lets you split Zip archives into multiple smaller Zip files. The Split dialog box contains a drop-down list with several preset size choices (helping you split archives to fit onto floppies, Iomega Zip disks, or CD-RWs, for instance), and you can specify custom sizes as well.

In addition to these and other enhancements—an improved Configuration dialog

box, for example—WinZip operates as a native Windows XP application, meaning it fully supports XP's desktop themes and colors. Better yet, the WinZip dialog boxes are now fully resizable. You can also use XP's Fast User Switching feature to log on to another account while the original account continues a lengthy WinZip operation.

Anyone owning a previously registered WinZip version can upgrade for free. You can, of course, still download this classic and run it as shareware. Regardless, with its extensive enhancements, WinZip 8.1 represents a much more significant upgrade than its mere point-one designation suggests.

—Neil Randall

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Inexpensive; integrates well with Windows Explorer; free upgrade

< CONS >

Free compression utilities exist

DIRECT PRICE: \$29
(free upgrade with any registered version)

< REQUIRES >

Windows 95, 98, Me, NT, 2000, or XP

WinZip Computing

877-724-4600

www.winzip.com

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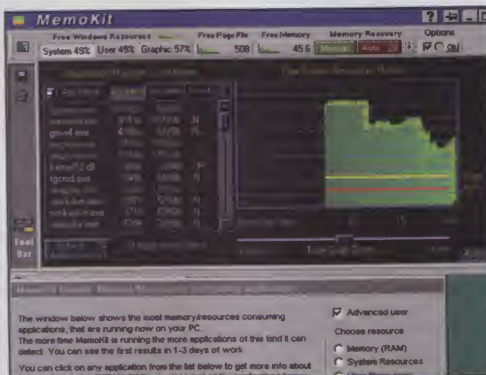
Turn Memory Hogs Into Dead Meat



WHY SETTLE FOR A RUN-OF-THE-MILL MEMORY manager that defragments your RAM as you work, when you could have MemoKit? ALS Software's MemoKit 3.0 not only defragments and recovers memory, it tells you how much free RAM your PC has, alerts you when resources are running low, and identifies programs that hog and squander precious system resources.

Some applications keep their program-file size down by sharing certain components (DLLs, for example) from universal libraries already on your hard drive, then don't release those components' memory back to Windows when you close the apps. MemoKit helps you terminate offenders and restore your memory.

Download the 485K executable file, open it, and follow the instructions to install the program. Once you get MemoKit up and running, the program works in the background to defragment your PC's memory, flush its cache, and recover RAM when it drops below a given point.



Click the MemoKit icon in the system tray to bring up its small control window. The window displays both a list of applications currently running on your computer and a dynamic bar graph that shows how much of your memory, resources, or swap files are free. This can help you decide which apps to shut down if you run low on memory.

Our favorite feature? Click Reports in its menu, and MemoKit generates a report of all programs you're running that consume a lot of RAM or resources. Although there's nothing inherently wrong with these apps, when you're in a low-memory or low-resources situation, loading a memory hog can crash your system. By identifying the greediest

programs, MemoKit helps you avoid loading them under dangerous conditions in the future.

Unfortunately, the feature isn't perfect. If the piggy program uses another as a carrier (AOL activated through Internet Explorer, for example), MemoKit fingers the carrier instead of the guilty party. Still, if you're looking for a simple, robust, feature-laden memory manager, stop hunting and get MemoKit 3.0.

—Barry Brenesal

EDITORS' RATING 9.0

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Defragments memory; identifies memory hogs

< CONS >

Can inaccurately tag programs as heavy resource users

DIRECT PRICE: \$29.95

< REQUIRES >

Pentium-class or faster processor; Windows 95, 98, Me, 2000, XP, or NT

ALS Software

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QUICKEN 2002 DELUXE

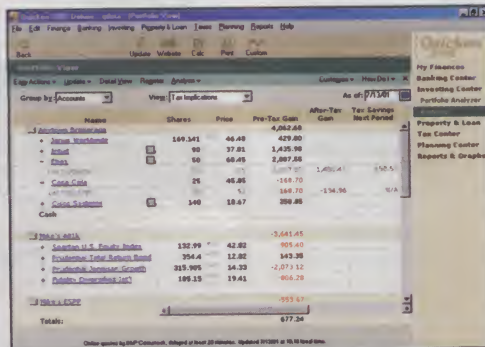
Money Management For Experienced Users

INTUIT'S QUICKEN 2002 DELUXE CONTINUES TO EVOLVE into a more powerful financial-management tool. However, the innovations in this latest version are more like base hits than home runs. Although Quicken 2002 improves its financial bases, current users may find it's not worth the upgrade. New users may find other money-management programs easier to use.

Quicken 2002 is available direct from Intuit in four versions:

Deluxe (\$59.95, before a \$20 rebate for previous Quicken users), Home & Business (\$79.95, before a \$20 rebate for previous Quicken users), Suite (\$99.95, before a \$20 rebate for all purchasers), and Home & Business Suite (\$139.95, before a \$20 rebate for all purchasers). We tested the Deluxe version, which lacks some of the legal-document features of the Suite version.

As before, Quicken remains a solid program for banking, paying bills, managing portfolios, planning, and reporting. It



maintains its intuitive, Web-style interface, and the main My Finances page continues to provide logical overviews as well as activity centers that deal with areas including investing, household, tax, and property/loan.

Quicken is particularly adept at tracking investments. We were impressed with the program's ability to work with investment indicators, evaluate asset allocation, estimate capital gains, manage 401(k) holdings, and display detailed portfolio views. The improved Capital Gains Estimator, another Quicken strong point, handles a broader range of tax situations, including stock options, carryovers, stock-purchase plans, and more. The data ties into Intuit's

TurboTax product, a definite plus.

If you're a Microsoft Money user wondering whether you should switch to Quicken, you can stand pat. And if you're a seasoned Quicken user, you don't necessarily need to upgrade to this version. But experienced users who want powerful tax and investment tools will want to give Quicken 2002 a long, hard look.

—Wayne Kawamoto

EDITORS' RATING 7.6

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

In-depth portfolio analysis; excellent high-end tools

< CONS >

Complex for new users

DIRECT PRICE: \$59.95

< REQUIRES >

67MB hard drive space. Windows: 90MHz or faster Pentium-class processor; Windows 95, 98, Me, 2000, or XP. Macintosh: Mac OS 9

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Best Buy, Computer Buyer's Guide, November 2001



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Best Buy, Computer Buyer's Guide, September 2001



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Many computer users have their first encounter with the USPS online outpost via an e-commerce site, which may link to USPS to provide tracking information. If you have a Priority Mail tracking number, you can go directly to the USPS site and access the information yourself. The tracking data is less detailed than that of the



UPS and FedEx sites. Instead of noting each arrival and departure at every location along the route, the USPS site supplies only the initial acceptance by the post office and the confirmed delivery at the package's destination. Useful, but it won't help you estimate when you may receive the package.

One of the premium services, NetPost Mailing Online, lets you prepare letters, booklets, or full-color postcards on your computer, upload them to the site, and deliver the documents via regular mail. An onscreen calculator helps you determine

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USPS has other premium services, including secure e-mail, Web-based certified mail, and wireless access to some of the site's features. If you had expected only boring facts about commemorative stamps, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

—David English

EDITORS' RATING 7.2

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Priority Mail tracking; convenient premium services

< CONS >

Some premium services are pricey

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The site, whose motto is "More for you. Less for them," specializes in services that have become increasingly competitive, including long-distance and cell-phone plans, credit cards, insurance premiums, loans, Internet-access fees, and utility rates. In some cases, the amount you save depends on where you live. If you reside in a region that doesn't have utility or broadband competition, for instance, you may not find any information you don't already have.

In other areas, however, the site can save you a lot of legwork. At

press time, LowerMyBills featured carriers offering long-distance rates as low as 4.5 cents a minute, auto insurance for about a third of what you may be paying now, and as much as 20 percent off on gas and electricity.

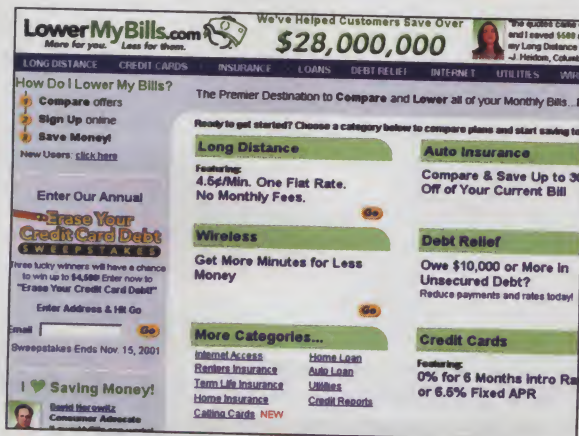
To ferret out the savings, you choose a category and compare the available offers. LowerMyBills makes its money when you sign up for a service through the site. Usually, you don't have to enter any personal information beyond your area code or state of residence. For some product applications, such as the one for auto insurance,

you'll have to supply your birth date, driving history, and occupation.

The site adheres to a fairly strict privacy policy, which you can read online. Most of the categories are set up so you can quickly get price quotes or see what your options are without having to make a commitment.

LowerMyBills is easy to use and can lead to sizable savings. It makes sense to compare low-cost suppliers at a single site, but keep in mind it's not always smart to go with the lowest bidder.

—D.E.



EDITORS' RATING 7.6

RATED 1 TO 10

< PROS >

Finds savings for products, services; compares supplier rates

< CONS >

Sometimes requires personal information

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GAMESPOT

ARCANUM: OF STEAMWORKS
AND MAGICK OBSCURA

The Price Of Progress

EDITORS' RATING 7.3

Arcanum is the fledgling effort of Troika Games, a small studio founded by several key members of the team that created Fallout, Interplay's intriguing 1997 post-apocalyptic role-playing game (RPG).



This time, the setting is a fantasy world undergoing an industrial revolution. Trains, electricity, and flintlock pistols suddenly appear in a world previously ruled by swords and sorcery. Meanwhile, social tensions are mounting—once-segregated societies such as elves, gnomes, and half-orcs are trying to coexist in newly built metropolises.

As in most RPGs, time in Arcanum is largely spent moving around, engaging in (or avoiding) combat, and talking to non-player characters. You can also develop combat, social, and stealth skills; learn spells in many different schools of magic; and even gain technical prowess

in various scientific disciplines.

Combat is a major part of Arcanum, and for the most part, it's pretty awful. You can choose from turn-based or real-time combat, and readily toggle between the two, but neither works well. In fact, no single aspect of Arcanum is particularly successful. Much of the game consists of running from one homely location to another and performing menial quests for characters who act like they could care less. The game's story has some interesting points, especially when it nears the conclusion, but it unfolds almost exclusively through dialog boxes of white text floating over characters' heads.

Nevertheless, if you're serious about RPGs—so serious that you don't care about graphics or combat quality—Arcanum may offer a needed change of pace.

—Greg Kasavin

(Sierra Studios; \$49.95 **34897**
www.sierrastudios.com)

INDEPENDENCE WAR 2:
EDGE OF CHAOS

Your Place In Space

EDITORS' RATING 8.9

Released in 1998, Independence War won praise for its original design and innovative gameplay, despite stiff competition from then-new entries in the Wing Commander, Star Wars: X-Wing, and FreeSpace space-combat series. Its sequel, Independence War 2: Edge of

SHATTERED GALAXY

Collective Strategies

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

When you log on to Shattered Galaxy, the American version of Nexon's enormously popular Korean real-time strategy game, you see what looks very much like Ultima Online. Your avatar is a hero, and you can walk around a little city, rubbing elbows with other heroes whose names and ranks hover overhead. Your first stop is a factory, where you purchase units. Money is rarely a problem, because units and repairs are incredibly cheap. The limiting factor is your hero's influence, which is increased by winning battles.

To advance, the game all but forces you into battles against other players.

You're aligned with one of four factions vying for control of adjoining sectors, each representing a single battle map. When one side attacks another's sector, a 20-minute battle begins. Whoever holds the most turf when the time runs out wins the sector and, more important, the most prestige.

The battles are spectacular, tense, and exciting, with one caveat: You're limited to one small corner of the action. Initially, you can use only six units at a time (this number increases as you progress), so success relies on coordinating your actions with other combatants in your faction.

The game looks somewhat primitive, running at 800-by-600 resolution and using blatantly 2D graphics. On the other hand, its ongoing nature gives Shattered Galaxy a quality most real-time strategy games lack, even those with superior technology. If you can accept your limited role in battle, overlook the dated visuals, and struggle through the game's tedious early hours, you'll find Shattered Galaxy has plenty to keep you engaged over the long haul.

—Tom Chick

(Nexon; \$29.99 **34899** www.nexon.net)



Chaos, also faces a battle for recognition—although now it's a struggle to generate enthusiasm for a forsaken genre.

One of the inherent strengths of both Independence War games is an amazingly realistic physics system. Edge of Chaos improves upon its predecessor by making the effects of inertia more manageable, eliminating missions that required you to solve impossible physics-based puzzles,

and adding multiplayer support. It also benefits from a new, streamlined interface that provides single-point access to functions previously provided by four different ship-systems stations (command, navigation, engineering, and weapons).

Despite these improvements, Edge of Chaos still has a steep learning curve. Dogfighting, in particular, can be very difficult. Instead of having all-encompassing shields (as do most space sims), your ships have individual shield deflectors that are only effective against one opponent at a time. Moreover, while the mission goals are varied and interesting, the missions themselves are too puzzle-based.

Its flaws and complexities notwithstanding, Independence War 2: Edge of Chaos is still one of the most enjoyable space sims we've ever played. It looks at least as good as any of its competitors and supports considerably higher resolutions than any space-combat game before it. Particle Systems has successfully created the game that fans of the genre have been waiting years to play.

—Desslock

(Infogrames; \$39.95 **34885**
www.independence-war2.com)

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MADDEN NFL 2002

Madden NFL Fumbles the Ball

EDITORS' RATING 6.7

You can look at Madden NFL 2002 in two ways. Some see a game that is significantly better than its predecessor, one with a respectable running game and great graphics touches such as helmets that reflect stadium lights. Others note that Madden 2001 is hardly a worthy benchmark, and that this new version has significant gameplay problems that render each of the difficulty settings dissatisfying.

The truth falls somewhere between these two extremes. Although the game's customizable AI sliders and wide range of difficulty settings make a huge difference in realism, you'll always find yourself compensating

for one problem or another. Bump up the difficulty to all-pro or all-Madden, and you'll lose most of your ability to move the ball on the ground, running to the outside becomes virtually impossible, and going straight up the gut is never worthwhile.

One mitigating factor that makes Madden 2002 more entertaining than it should be is its amazing visual quality. Graphics are close to photo-realistic, particularly the player models that are so detailed you can even see the hair on some players' arms. Gamers typically unmoved by this sort of minutiae will be wowed by the realistic facial features, skin tones, and even rolls of fat jiggling around the bellies of the offensive tackles.

Madden NFL 2002 is one of those games that people may want to have in their collections simply to show off the raw power of their expensive gaming rigs.

Unfortunately, it doesn't play nearly as good as it looks.

—Brett Todd

(Electronic Arts; \$39.95 **34898** www.easports.com)



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DESKTOP ENTERTAINMENT
SYSTEMS

The After-Hours PC

Games, movies, music—
these five PCs do it all.

BY RICK BROIDA

Does your PC serve as a home theater system? A video arcade? A music studio? Welcome to the age of the multitasking desktop, which lets you watch DVD movies with true surround sound, play games with arcade-quality graphics, and burn CDs in less time than it takes to cook a TV dinner.

We asked vendors to build a machine that would keep us thoroughly entertained, and five answered the call: ABS Computer Technologies, Dell Computer, Gateway, Polywell Computers, and Systemax. The five systems we received have much in common: They come with at least 128MB of RAM (most have 256MB), a 19-inch monitor, a three-piece (or more) speaker system, and DVD-ROM and CD-RW drives. All five systems delivered flawless DVD playback and fast, buffer-protected CD burning.

Interestingly, these machines prove that if you want a system built for fun, you may have to do a little customization. Dell and Gateway, for instance, sell extras such as game bundles and joysticks but include no such amenities with their systems. And Polywell outfits the K7-1400DDR with a business-class graphics card—obviously not the right choice for an entertainment system.

In perusing the benchmark scores, keep in mind that the numbers are relative. Although the Dell came in last in our application-driven test suite, it's still perfectly acceptable for watching DVD movies, burning CDs, and playing most games.



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Category Tested	Desktop Entertainment PCs
Price Range	\$1,299 to \$1,599
Minimum Configuration	128MB RAM; 40GB hard drive; 19-inch monitor; CD-RW drive; DVD-ROM drive; nonintegrated sound and graphics cards; three-piece speaker system; Windows Me
Companies Included	ABS Computer Technologies, Dell Computer, Gateway, Polywell Computers, Systemax
Editors' Choice	ABS Performance 5

ABS PERFORMANCE 5

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

PROS: Pack-leading performance; top-notch hardware; two full games; handy binder for system materials
CONS: One available USB port; limited tech-support hours



True to its name, the \$1,599-direct ABS Performance 5 delivers the best overall performance of the five systems reviewed here. It's also proof that the CPU doesn't tell the whole story: Its 1.4GHz AMD Athlon kept pace with one of the 1.7GHz Pentium 4 machines and buried the other.

Of course, graphics performance plays a key role in overall system speed, and the Performance 5 stocks one of the most powerful graphics cards available: a Leadtek WinFast GeForce3 TD with 64MB of onboard DDR memory. Not surprisingly, its 3D test scores were through the roof. Plus, the card includes not only a TV-out connector, but also dual-monitor support in the form of one VGA port and one DVI port (though no DVI-to-VGA adapter for the latter). Factor in Cambridge SoundWorks' excellent FPS2000 five-piece speaker system, and this system is a gamer's dream come true.

ABS even includes two games—the action-packed Gunlok and the GeForce3 showcase DroneZ—that let you appreciate it all right out of the box. ABS also bundles Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Norton AntiVirus, and a few other handy utilities. Like other ABS systems we've tested, the Performance 5 ships with a large binder with dividers for component manuals and driver discs.

It takes a screwdriver to get inside the Performance 5's case, which has space for at least one more of everything (expansion cards, drives, memory modules, and so on). Regrettably, the system has only two USB ports, one of which is used by the mouse.

The mouse itself is a great one: Microsoft's optical, four-button IntelliMouse Explorer. Unfortunately, ABS doesn't supply

DESKTOP ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

the USB-to-PS/2 adapter normally included with the mouse. The Performance 5 also uses Microsoft's Internet Keyboard, which serves up a variety of handy Web-navigation buttons, although it lacks volume and playback controls.

Rounding out the hardware is a 60GB IBM hard drive, one of the largest in the



ABS Performance 5

group, and a Plextor 16x/10x/40x CD-RW drive. (We no longer test CD performance, but Plextor's reputation for fast hardware is well-deserved.) Even the monitor, Hitachi's

CM715, ranks above the displays bundled with most systems, exhibiting vibrant color and sharp images.

ABS would be wise to add more USB ports and keep its tech-support department open for longer than West Coast business hours. But those few shortcomings don't diminish the fact that the Performance 5 is a seriously good deal.

DELL DIMENSION 4300

EDITORS' RATING 5.8

PROS: Attractive matte-black components; solid 3D performance; easy-access case; six months free Internet
CONS: Poor application performance; weak software bundle; no modem; one-year warranty

beta

With the Dimension 4300, Dell finally sheds its all-work-and-no-play image. Whereas the company's previous "entertainment" systems seemed as staid and ordinary as its business machines, the Dimension 4300 has style—at least on the outside. The entire system is modeled in beautiful matte black, with gray accents adorning the tower and speakers.

Of course, sometimes beauty is only skin-deep. Although it's stocked with a 1.5GHz

< FEATURE COMPARISON >

	ABS Performance 5	Dell Dimension 4300 beta
DIRECT PRICE	\$1,599	\$1,439
CONFIGURATION		
Processor	1.4GHz Athlon	1.5GHz Pentium 4
System Memory (Installed/Max.)	256MB/1GB DDR	256MB/512MB SDRAM
System Memory Speed	266MHz	133MHz
Chipset	AMD-761/Via VT686B	Intel 845
Hard Drive	60GB IBM	40GB Western Digital
Hard Drive Spin Rate (rpm)	7,200	7,200
Graphics Card	Leadtek WinFast GeForce3 TD	nVidia GeForce2 MX
Onboard Graphics Memory	64MB DDR	32MB SDRAM
19-Inch Monitor	Hitachi CM715	Dell M991
CD-RW Drive	Plextor PlexWriter 16/10/40A	NEC NR-7800A
CD-RW Write/Rewrite/Read	16x/10x/40x	16x/10x/40x
DVD-ROM Drive	16x Toshiba SD-M1502	16x NEC DV-5800A
Sound Card	Sound Blaster Live Value	Sound Blaster Live Value
Speaker System	Cambridge FPS2000	Harman Kardon HK695
Number of Speakers	Five	Three
56kbps Modem	Zoom 1120M	None
Network Adapter	Linksys LKF-5100+	3Com 3C905C-TX-M
Dimensions (HWD, Inches)	16.5x7.8x18.5	16.7x7.1x17.6
Weight (Pounds)	40	28
CONNECTIVITY		
Ports	Parallel, two serial, two USB	Parallel, serial, four USB
Front-Accessible 3.5-Inch Bays (Total/Available)	Two/one	Two/one
Front-Accessible 5.25-Inch Bays (Total/Available)	Three/one	Two/none
Internal 3.5-Inch Bays (Total/Available)	Two/one	Two/one
Internal 5.25-Inch Bays (Total/Available)	None/none	None/none
PCI Slots (Total/Available)	Five/two	Four/two
AGP Slots	One	One
SOFTWARE		
Installed OS as Tested	Windows Me	Windows Me
Bundled Software	Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Easy CD Creator 4, WinFast DVD, Norton AntiVirus, Ghost, Virtual Drive, DroneZ, Gunlok	Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Norton AntiVirus 2001, Easy CD Creator 4, FoneSync, WinDVD
SERVICE AND SUPPORT		
Length of Parts/Labor Warranty	Three years/lifetime	One year/one year
Length of Onsite-Service Coverage	None	One year
Extended/Upgraded Warranties Available	Yes	Yes
Toll-Free Technical Support	Yes	Yes
Technical-Support Hours (ET)	11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. M-F	24 hours daily

Pentium 4 processor and Intel's latest chipset (the 845, which enables the use of SDRAM rather than costlier RDRAM), the Dimension trailed the pack in application-performance tests. Chalk it up to the memory, which operates at a much slower clock speed than RDRAM. We wouldn't mind the performance hit if a bargain price came with it, but at \$1,439 direct, the Dimension costs about the same as the other systems in the group.

The performance picture isn't all bad; nVidia's powerful GeForce2 MX graphics card helped lead the Dimension to second-place scores in the 3D-graphics and Quake III Arena tests. Thus, this is a solid machine for game players, and the GeForce2 card's TV-out connector enables big-screen action. Unfortunately, Dell doesn't bundle any games with the system—only obligatory titles such as Microsoft Works Suite 2001 and Norton AntiVirus.

Dell's M991 monitor earns high marks for color, geometry, brightness, and contrast, and we liked the combination of the Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live Value card and Harman Kardon's boisterous three-piece speaker system. The keyboard has three pre-

DESKTOP ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

grammable buttons for loading applications or URLs, or performing system functions, but lacks dedicated volume and CD/DVD-playback controls. The keyboard itself feels flimsy, the keys mushy. However, we adored the



Dell Dimension 4300

tower, which, with the push of a button, swings open for incredibly easy access to the drives and motherboard. Inside, you'll find room for a second SDRAM module, two PCI devices, and another hard drive.

Dell cleverly routed two of the system's four USB ports and a headphone jack to the

front of the tower—and then thoughtlessly hid them behind a hinged, flip-up door. To access any of the ports, you have to kneel down and just about put your head on the floor. Even more puzzling, Dell shipped our evaluation system without a modem.

Although Dell generously provides six months of free DellNet Internet service, the Dimension's warranty lasts only one year. In short, the style is there; now Dell just needs to round out the substance.

GATEWAY 500X

EDITORS' RATING 6.2

PROS: Six USB ports; versatile video card
CONS: No available PCI slots; mediocre overall performance; less than stellar monitor; one-year warranty

Although the Gateway 500X has a leading-edge Pentium 4 processor, our evaluation system came with only 128MB of RAM. (The company has since bumped that up to 256MB without increasing the price.) At \$1,299 direct, it is also the group's price leader, but it's not all that much less than systems offering significantly better performance and features.

Like the Dell Dimension 4300, the Gateway 500X incorporates the Intel 845 chipset, which enables the use of SDRAM instead of the more expensive RDRAM. Not surprisingly, overall system performance lags as a result: The Gateway couldn't keep up with the RDRAM-based Systemax Venture MU17, which also packs a 1.7GHz Pentium 4. On the other hand, the 500X achieved higher 3D-graphics scores, thanks to its ATI Radeon VE, an entry-level graphics card that's powerful enough for the weekend gamer but too slow for serious play.

To its credit, the Radeon includes an S-Video TV-out port, as well as VGA and DVI connectors, thereby enabling dual-monitor support. Although ATI supplies a DVI-to-VGA adapter (for connecting dual analog monitors) with the retail version of the card, the adapter was nowhere to be found in the Gateway box.

The three-piece Boston Acoustics BA735 speaker system is passable for games and music, but DVD audio—movie dialog in particular—sounded a bit harsh. It's worth spending the extra \$100 to upgrade to the far superior five-piece BA7500 package. Gateway's EV910 monitor provided rich color, but images seemed a bit grainy and exhibited some vertical moiré problems. (We easily corrected the latter using the one-touch screen controls.)

The 500X generously supplies half a dozen USB ports, two of them easily accessible at the front of the tower. One of the system's

Gateway 500X	Polywell K7-1400DDR	Systemax Venture MU17
\$1,299	\$1,599	\$1,449 (mfr. est.)
1.7GHz Pentium 4	1.4GHz Athlon	1.7GHz Pentium 4
128MB/2GB SDRAM	256MB/2GB DDR	256MB/2GB RDRAM
133MHz	266MHz	400MHz
Intel 845	AMD 760	Intel 850
40GB Western Digital	Two 40GB Maxtor	60GB Maxtor
7,200	7,200	7,200
ATI Radeon VE	Matrox Millennium G450 DualHead	ATI All-in-Wonder 128 Pro
64MB SDRAM	32MB SDRAM	32MB SDRAM
Gateway EV910	AOC 1995S	Systemax F996 BYM
NEC NR-7700A	BTC 1610i	Sony CRX160E
12x/8x/32x	16x/10x/40x	12x/8x/32x
16x Panasonic GD-8000	16x Toshiba SD-M1502	16x Toshiba SD-M1502
Sound Blaster Live Value	Sound Blaster Live Value	Sound Blaster Live 5.1
Boston Acoustics BA735	Cambridge PCWorks FourPointSurround	Cyber Acoustics CA-3770
Three	Five	Three
GVC SF-1156IV R9A	Lucent WinModem	Conexant SoftK56
Intel Pro/100 VE	Realtek RTL8139(A)	None
18.4x7.8x19.1	17.6x8.4x19.4	18x16.5x7.3
35	40	30
Parallel, serial, three IEEE 1394, six USB	Parallel, serial, two USB	Parallel, serial, two USB
Two/one	Three/two	One/one
Two/none	Four/two	Three/one
Three/two	Three/one	Two/one
Two/none	None/none	One/one
Three/none	Five/three	Five/three
One	One	One
Windows Me	Windows Me	Windows Me
Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Norton AntiVirus 2001, Easy CD Creator 4, One Tough Computer Cop, CinePlayer, PC-Doctor	Family PC Starter 2001, Norton AntiVirus 2000, Easy CD Creator 4, Matrox DVD Player	Microsoft Works Suite 2001, Puzzle Collection, Motocross Madness 2, Flight Simulator 2000, FoneSync, Nero Burning ROM 5.1
One year/one year	Three years/five years	Three years (five on CPU)/one year
One year	None	One year
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
24 hours daily	24 hours daily	24 hours daily

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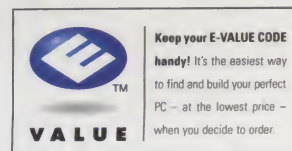
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CD-Burning Tips

New to the world of CD-RW drives? Here are a few tips and tricks that will keep you burning faster and more effectively.

■ It can take 20 minutes or more to format a CD-RW disc with Roxio's DirectCD utility—an eternity if all you want to do is move some large files between PCs. An easy way around this is to use Easy CD Creator's Data CD option rather than DirectCD to write to the disc. Once you've copied your files, Roxio's CD Eraser utility will let you clean off the data so you can use the disc again.

■ If you're having trouble copying a CD with Easy CD Creator, try a more robust utility, such as Nero Burning ROM (\$49 download; www.ahead.de) or the aptly named CloneCD (\$31.50 download; www.elby.de). Both are somewhat more complicated programs, but they're much more likely to get the job done.

■ Try to leave the computer alone while you're recording discs. Although the drives themselves have memory caches designed to compensate for the dreaded "buffer underrun," which ruins CDs, too much hard drive activity can still gum up the works.

■ Finally, when you run out of jewel cases to store your CDs (almost a certainty if you purchase blank discs on a spindle), you'll find that the standard jewel case can hold two discs. Just be sure to place both CDs in the case with the data side down and to leave some writing room on the paper insert.

—R.B. and Steve Schwartz

three IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports resides there as well. A tool-free side panel makes for easy access to the drab, gray-accented case. Inside, not a single expansion slot remains available, but you'll find two slots each for hard drives and memory modules.

The system's sturdy, comfortable keyboard includes volume, mute, and playback controls, plus five programmable quick-start buttons (and a thankfully straightforward util-

DESKTOP ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

ity to program them). Gateway's software bundle includes the usual Works suite and a generous selection of utilities, but nothing entertaining. Ironically, the preloaded HelpSpot tool, which complements the exhaustive system manual, crashed every time we ran it.

The Gateway 500X is a well-rounded and likable machine, but when you factor in its middle-of-the-road feature set and skimpy one-year warranty, it clearly lacks a competitive edge.

POLYWELL K7-1400DDR

EDITORS' RATING 6.0

PROS: Blazing application speed; dual-monitor support; family-friendly software

CONS: Slow graphics; crowded keyboard; inconsistent hardware selection

In trying to craft a system that stands out from the crowd, Polywell gets an A for effort and a C for execution. The tower, covered in silver paint, certainly looks different. The mouse and keyboard match the color scheme, but the monitor and speakers don't—making for a system that looks like a hodgepodge of unrelated components.

The 1.4GHz Athlon-based K7-1400DDR is also a hodgepodge of performance numbers. Although this \$1,599-direct system tied the ABS and Systemax machines for best overall application performance, it produced painfully slow 3D-graphics and Quake III Arena test scores. The culprit: the Matrox Millennium G450 DualHead card, a competent choice for everyday apps and DVD playback (its dual-monitor support is a plus for both), but dismal for graphics software and games.

Polywell outfits the system with two 40GB hard drives connected to a RAID IDE controller. While this arrangement lends a



Gateway 500X

significant boost to hard drive performance and can be an attractive feature for serious gamers, we'd gladly trade it for a faster ATI or nVidia-based card.

We'd also prefer a better monitor. The AOC 1995S exhibited warm color, but text looked a bit fuzzy at 1,024 by 768. We also had trouble adjusting the pincushioning and pin balance to acceptable levels. We have no complaints, however, with the terrific-sounding Cambridge SoundWorks PCWorks FourPointSurround speakers, which come with floor stands for the rear satellites.

The stylish two-tone mouse is a respectable knockoff of Microsoft's IntelliMouse Explorer, complete with a red-glowing optical sensor. But the compact, nicely responsive iMac-style keyboard is as crowded as a notebook's—meaning the arrow and cursor keys are sandwiched together. On the plus side, it has four programmable application buttons, and its function keys can double as volume and playback controls.

You have to remove two thumbscrews to
(continued on page 112)



Polywell K7-1400DDR

< COMPUTER SHOPPER BENCHMARKS >

	ABS Performance 5	Dell Dimension 4300 beta	Gateway 500X	Polywell K7-1400DDR	Systemax Venture MU17
PROCESSOR	1.4GHz AMD Athlon	1.5GHz Intel Pentium 4	1.7GHz Intel Pentium 4	1.4GHz AMD Athlon	1.7GHz Intel Pentium 4
MEMORY	256MB DDR	256MB SDRAM	128MB SDRAM	256MB DDR	256MB RDRAM
APPLICATION PERFORMANCE					
BAPCo SYSmark 2001	149	117	128	149	148
Internet Content Creation	144	129	136	144	159
Office Productivity	154	107	120	155	137
3D-GRAPHICS PERFORMANCE					
MadOnion.com's 3DMark2001 Pro (16-Bit Color)	5,537	2,825	2,005	1,833	1,352
MadOnion.com's 3DMark2001 Pro (32-Bit Color)	5,424	2,235	1,877	1,140	NA
REAL-WORLD 3D GAME TESTING					
Quake III Arena (Frames per Second)	133.9	50.8	37.7	17.8	19.3
MadOnion.com's Video2000 MPEG-2 Encoding Performance (Frames per Second)	35.3	33.7	36.4	35.1	42.0

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(continued from page 108)

open the mammoth silver tower, where you'll find ample expansion room. The system has only two USB ports, both located at the rear.

The major inclusion in Polywell's software bundle is Family PC Starter 2001, a collection of 75-plus full-version applications, games, and utilities. Alongside the mostly unknown titles are a few keepers such as StarOffice, Musicmatch Jukebox, and the 2001 Grolier Encyclopedia.

Polywell's generous warranty includes three years of parts coverage and five years of labor, though the 24/7 toll-free phone support expires after one year. The Polywell K7-1400DDR is fast and capable, but it still seems too much like a machine that was built for work instead of play.

SYSTEMAX VENTURE MU17

EDITORS' RATING 7.0

PROS: Versatile graphics card; spacious 60GB hard drive; excellent software; powerful speakers
CONS: Weak graphics, hard drive performance; no Ethernet adapter; one-year labor warranty

There's nothing particularly flashy or extraordinary about the Systemax Venture MU17, but this \$1,449-estimated system proves that thoughtful selection of components and software can result in a decent entertainment center.

Take the speakers, for instance: two attractive satellites and a mammoth subwoofer from Cyber Acoustics. Because the company isn't a household name, we didn't expect much, but the speakers pumped out clean, boisterous audio. They're ideal for action movies and games.

As for video, Systemax's choice of an ATI All-in-Wonder 128 Pro card is sure to please anyone who wants to edit video or watch TV. The amazingly versatile card includes a TV tuner, TiVo-like digital-VCR software, robust video-capture and -editing software, and video-out ports for connecting to a TV or VCR. The chink in the armor is graphics speed. The Venture produced some of the group's lowest 3D-graphics and Quake III Arena scores. Although the bundled games played fine in our real-world tests, the Systemax is probably not the best machine for dedicated gamers.

Still, the Venture comes with more—and better—software than most of the other sys-

DESKTOP ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

tems here, thanks in part to the ATI collection. In addition to Microsoft Works Suite 2001, you get three excellent Microsoft games, including Motocross Madness 2. We particularly liked Tech-in-a-Box, which lets you perform complete system backups, ask natural-language questions, and "roll back" the system (which, admittedly, Windows Me can already do).

As the only system in the group with both a 1.7GHz Pentium 4 processor and 256MB of RDRAM, the Venture MU17 should have burned up the benchmark charts. Instead, it merely tied the ABS and Polywell machines for the top spot in application performance. The All-in-Wonder card and the relatively poky hard drive subsystem were the weak links in the speed chain.

Speaking of weak links, the Systemax monitor loses a lot of clarity at resolutions above 1,024 by 768. The Venture is also the only system here without an Ethernet



Systemax Venture MU17

adapter—something to consider if you have LAN or broadband plans.

The Systemax Venture MU17 may be a decidedly mixed bag in terms of features and performance, but it's a system that knows how to entertain. With a few improvements, it could even steal the show.

HAVING FUN YET?

In selecting a desktop entertainment system, it can be tough to find the perfect combination of blazing 3D graphics, roof-rattling surround sound, desirable software, and good hardware. The ABS Performance 5 comes closest to that mark with its state-of-the-art GeForce3 graphics card and exceptional Cambridge SoundWorks speaker system, to

Chips Ahoy

In an effort to jump-start sales of the Pentium 4—and to narrow the price gap with Athlon-based systems—Intel has unveiled the 845 chipset, code-named Brookdale. While the first generation of Pentium 4 machines required the use of Rambus' pricey RDRAM, systems employing the 845 chipset can take advantage of dirt-cheap PC133 SDRAM. The result: Pentium 4 packages that cost roughly \$100 to \$200 less than their RDRAM-based counterparts.

Although the move may indeed help sales, tech-savvy buyers aren't likely to bite. PC133 SDRAM operates at a much slower clock speed than RDRAM and has just one-third the bandwidth. Our tests of the 845-equipped Dell Dimension 4300 and Gateway Performance 1700 revealed poor overall performance relative to RDRAM-based Pentium 4 systems (and competing Athlon-based systems using DDR memory).

The picture may improve early next year when the 845 adds accommodations for DDR SDRAM, which offers higher clock speeds and bandwidth than PC133 SDRAM, but still costs significantly less than RDRAM. In fact, DDR SDRAM has a lower latency, meaning that the 845/DDR combination could lead to some of the fastest Pentium 4 systems yet. —R.B.

say nothing of its roomy hard drive, sharp monitor, and modern game bundle.

You may also want to consider the Systemax Venture MU17, which, despite low 3D test scores, offers great video features, audio hardware, and games. The Dell Dimension 4300, Gateway 500X, and Polywell K7-1400DDR have their respective merits, but they don't stand out as systems created with entertainment in mind. ▼

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< PRODUCT SUMMARY >

EDITORS' RATING (Rated 1 to 10)	8.0	5.8	6.2	6.0	7.0
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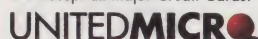
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DIGITAL CAMERAS

These five 2-megapixel digital cameras—most priced well under \$400—produce quality images with point-and-shoot ease.



Take Your Best Shot

► By Aimee Baldrige

Christy Balich

Jay Munro

Kymerly Orcholski

& Becky Waring



If you've been holding out for a decent, affordable digital camera, now's the time to start looking. With most product lines now in the fifth or sixth generation, manufacturers have shifted the focus to features people really appreciate: ergonomic designs, easy operation, and imaging flexibility. The upshot is a new crop of moderately priced digital cameras that are faster and much more capable than their predecessors.

It wasn't all that long ago that digital cameras priced less than \$400 were clearly inferior to almost any film camera. But that's no longer the case. The five 2-megapixel digicams reviewed here are excellent alternatives to film. In fact, they belong to a different breed of camera, with distinct characteristics of its own. Some of the cameras we tested give you a lot of latitude, letting you adjust image parameters or add effects—things you simply can't do with film unless you're willing to spend a lot of time in a darkroom. Other models keep things simple for users who just want to shoot some photos without any tinkering.

With prices on all of these cameras dropping steadily, giving digital photography a try doesn't have to be such an onerous decision anymore. Of course, if you frequently make prints in sizes larger than 5 inches by 7 inches, you should look into higher-resolution models. And advanced photographers will probably want a camera that offers more manual control. But if you're a casual shooter or novice in search of a digital camera that will make you look like an old hand, read on.



< FACT FILE >

Category Tested	2-Megapixel Digital Cameras
Price Range	\$255 to \$406
Minimum Configuration	2-megapixel digital still camera with USB connection; 1.5-inch LCD; 1,600-by-1,200 maximum resolution
Companies Included	Canon U.S.A., Eastman Kodak, Nikon, Olympus America, Sony Electronics
Editors' Choice	Canon PowerShot A20

CANON POWERSHOT A20

EDITORS' RATING 7.8

PROS: Fast; excellent image quality; competitive price; ergonomic design

CONS: No rechargeable batteries; doesn't save uncompressed images; no video capture



With its impressive speed, excellent image quality, and straightforward operation, the 2.1-megapixel Canon PowerShot A20 makes a great entry-

DIGITAL CAMERAS

level digital camera. You'll need to factor in the cost of a larger memory card and rechargeable batteries if you buy this digi-cam, but even then it's still well worth its reasonable \$362 average price.

The A20 makes a few departures from the look of other Canon family members. Gone is the compact, bricklike housing of the digital Elphs, in favor of a larger, more ergonomically pleasing rectangle. This revamped design provides room for bigger, more accessible buttons as well as four standard AA batteries. Nevertheless, you'll want to invest in some NiMH rechargeables, because with heavy LCD use the alkalines will be out of juice after 40 or 50 photos.

The A20's clearly marked buttons make all of its essential features easily accessible. The logically organized menu system is also easy to use, and you can view images on the LCD

while scrolling through settings. The 3x optical lens zooms smoothly, and there's practically no shutter lag. The flash causes a delay of about a second after the shutter is released, but the A20 is still a fast shooter that won't make you miss out on action shots.

Our test images appeared well-exposed, recording nicely under most types of indoor lighting. We were further impressed by the minimal amount of image noise in our photos, which were also free of undesirable edge effects and chromatic aberrations. (These flaws affect many 2-megapixel cameras, giving smooth surfaces a mottled look and introducing undesirable fringes of color where dark and bright areas meet.) Our outdoor shots looked vivid and detailed, and achieved a good balance between areas of shade and bright sun. Flash photos, however, tended to display too much red.

The A20 offers multiple flash settings, 2.5-frame-per-second continuous shooting, and black-and-white and panorama modes.

< FEATURE COMPARISON >

	Canon PowerShot A20	Kodak DX3500	Nikon Coolpix 775	Olympus Camedia D-510 Zoom	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-P50
AVERAGE PRICE	\$362	\$255	\$406	\$348	\$371
Weight (Ounces)	8.8	7.2	6.6	11	9.3
Dimensions (HWD, in.)	2.8x4.3x1.5	2.8x4.5x2	2.6x3.4x1.7	2.6x4.6x1.9	2.3x4.3x1.5
LCD Size (Inches)	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.5
Optical Viewfinder	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CCD Resolution (Megapixels)	2.1	2.2	2.14	2.1	2.11
STORAGE					
Removable Memory Type	CompactFlash Type I	CompactFlash Type I	CompactFlash Type I	SmartMedia	Sony Memory Stick
Included Removable Memory	8MB	None	8MB	8MB	4MB
Internal Memory Size	NA	8MB	NA	NA	NA
Image Capacity (Standard Resolution)	46	49	16	24	57
Image Capacity (Highest Resolution)	Seven	12	Eight	Five	Three
Supported File Formats	JPEG	JPEG	JPEG, Motion JPEG	JPEG, TIFF, Motion JPEG	JPEG, TIFF, GIF, MPEG
Uncompressed Output	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
LENS SPECIFICATIONS					
Optical Zoom Level	3x	NA	3x	3x	3x
Digital Zoom Level	2.5x	3x	2.5x	3x	2x
Widest Wide-Angle Focal Length*	35mm	38mm	38mm	35mm	41mm
Longest Telephoto Focal Length*	105mm	38mm	115mm	105mm	123mm
Closest Macro Focus Distance (in.)	6.3	9	1.6	8	1.2
Widest Aperture Setting (f-stop)	2.8	4.5	2.8	2.8	3.8
Narrowest Aperture Setting (f-stop)	11	8	7.9	4.4	8
Fastest Shutter Speed (Sec.)	1/1,500	1/1,218	1/1,000	1/1,000	1/725
Slowest Shutter Speed (Sec.)	1	1/8	1	1/2	2
Accepts Interchangeable or Additional Lenses	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
ADDITIONAL FEATURES					
Video Capture	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Metering Modes	Center-weighted	Average	256-segment matrix	Digital ESP, spot	Center-weighted, spot
White-Balance Options	Auto, four presets	Auto	Auto, five presets, manual	Auto, four presets	Auto, two presets
Number of Scene Modes	None	None	Seven	None	One
Black-and-White Mode	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Number of Compression Modes	Three	Two	Three	Five	Two
DPOF Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slow-Sync Flash	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flash Range (Feet)	13.8	6.2	10	13	6.5
Battery Type	AA alkalines and rechargeables	AA alkalines and rechargeables	Proprietary lithium-ion pack, or two CR5 lithium	Four AA alkaline, NiMH, lithium, or nickel-cadmium; or two lithium CR-V3 packs	Alkaline (InfoLithium optional)
AC Adapter Included	No	No	No	No (optional)	No
PC/Mac-Compatible	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
SUPPORT					
Standard Warranty	One year	One year	One year	One year	One year parts/ 90 days labor
Toll-Free Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Live Tech-Support Hours (ET)	8 a.m. to 8 p.m. M-F	9 a.m. to 8 p.m. M-F	24 hours daily	9 a.m. to 10 p.m. M-F	24 hours daily

NA = Not applicable; * = 35mm-camera equivalent

DIGITAL CAMERAS

It also supplies plenty of white-balance setting options, as well as exposure compensation, although it doesn't capture video or save uncompressed images.

Overall, the PowerShot A20 supplies the level of image quality and functionality needed to entice 35mm point-and-shoot users to go digital.

KODAK DX3500

EDITORS' RATING 7.1

PROS: Easy to use; comfortable design; 8MB internal memory; optional EasyShare dock

CONS: No optical zoom; unimpressive image quality; no manual controls

Designed to help users make a smooth transition from a point-and-shoot film camera to a digital model, Kodak's EasyShare System products forgo lengthy feature lists and confusing controls in favor of ease of use and integration with Kodak's imaging software and online services. The first entry in the line, the 2.2-megapixel Kodak DX3500, succeeds on most fronts. And its low \$255 average price makes it the most affordable of the cameras included here.

Although it lacks an optical zoom lens, the DX3500 looks and feels very much like a typical point-and-shoot 35mm camera. With its logical menus, a few well-placed buttons, and three simple camera modes—Settings, Review, and Still (capture)—the camera feels instantly comfortable to anyone using it. The close-up-mode switch is right at your fingertips for easy access, as are the flash button and other flash features (including red-eye reduction and fill flash). The LCD isn't the sharpest we've seen, but it's perfectly adequate as a viewfinder and review screen, and its menu system is easy to read.

The Kodak lets you get the shots you want with minimal shutter lag. It takes at least 7 seconds to save a picture, but you can take a few more shots while the camera is processing the first one. The DX3500 has a CompactFlash slot and 8MB of internal memory, which lets you capture up to 12 shots at the camera's highest-quality

setting. Ease of use is also evident in the camera's software bundle, which provides simple tools for basic image editing, organizing, and online sharing.

Although it's competitively priced for a 2.2-megapixel camera, the DX3500's image quality lags a bit behind the competition. Our test images were generally well-exposed, with adequate detail in highlights and shadows. But they also suffered from a noticeable amount of noise, which can make skin tones look unnaturally flushed. Colors in our test

NIKON COOLPIX 775

EDITORS' RATING 7.5

PROS: Compact, comfortable design; useful Best Shot Selection mode; superior features; good battery life; rechargeable batteries/charger

CONS: Slow startup, shot-to-shot times; skimpy 8MB CompactFlash card

Nikon eases digital-photography novices into the medium with the Coolpix 775, providing a well-designed, moderately priced (\$406 on average), 2.1-megapixel camera with great automatic features and a useful selection of more advanced controls.

An ergonomically pleasing design makes the 775 easy to use one-handed.

The camera lets your index finger rest above the shutter button and leaves your thumb free to operate the zoom and menu-scroll buttons. This compact design is not without its compromises, however: The battery compartment's close proximity to the tripod mount means you won't be able to change batteries without removing the camera from your tripod.

Nevertheless, the 775's features are ideal for casual photographers looking to improve their shooting skills and learn about more advanced digital features. A fully automatic mode and seven scene presets are all easily accessible through the camera's mode dial, and you can activate a Best Shot Selection (BSS) mode through the LCD menu. BSS lets you hold the shutter-release button down to take up to 10 shots in rapid succession, then automatically records the one with the

most image detail—a useful feature in low-light situations and other tricky shooting conditions. When you're ready to move on to more advanced image controls, you'll find an ample selection of white-balance, sharpness, and exposure settings available through the LCD menu.

Unfortunately, the 775 isn't always quick and efficient. Startup takes about



Clockwise from top left:
Canon PowerShot A20,
Kodak DX3500,
Nikon Coolpix 775,
Olympus Camedia D-510 Zoom,
Sony Cyber-shot DSC-P50

images were vivid and well-balanced, though the camera's automatic white balance tends to give pictures a slightly blue cast.

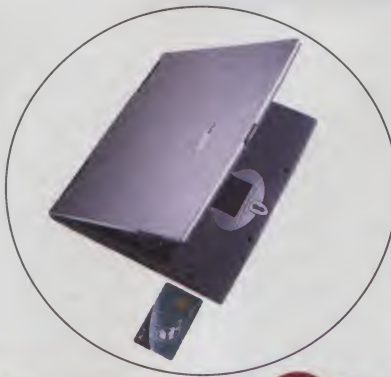
With its affordable price and simple operation, the Kodak DX3500 is a boon to digital-camera beginners and casual shooters. We hope future additions to the EasyShare line will offer better image quality, however.



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15 seconds, and a delay of approximately 12 seconds occurs between shots. Like most midrange digital cameras, the 775 also has some shutter delay—in this case, about 2 seconds. The camera offers good battery life, though, and ships with a rechargeable battery and charger.

Our test images were sharp and well-exposed. The 775 offers a broad dynamic range, decent color balance, and lots of effective flash options. Its macro mode is also excellent, letting you get as close as 1.6 inches from your subject. We did notice some obvious aberrations in scenes containing sharp contrasts, however.

The Coolpix 775 could take faster pictures, but it's still a great camera for family users and digital novices. Its smooth ergonomics, plentiful features, and sharp images make it easy to recommend.

OLYMPUS CAMEDIA D-510 ZOOM

EDITORS' RATING 7.6

PROS: Excellent image quality; fast performance; no software needed for image downloads; good battery life

CONS: Awkward open/close procedure; meager 8MB SmartMedia card

If you're looking for a point-and-shoot digicam that doesn't compromise on quality and features, the 2.1-megapixel Olympus Camedia D-510 Zoom is a smart choice.

The camera's 1.8-inch LCD and optical viewfinder are bright and easy to use, and the 3x lens zooms smoothly. Our only quibble is with the awkward shutoff procedure, which

requires you to close the lens cover halfway, wait for the lens to retract, then close it all the way and push down the pop-up flash. Olympus may have opted to leave out an on/off button as an economic consideration on this \$348-average model, but we found this three-step process awkward.

On the other hand, the D-510's battery life is excellent. With the LCD off, the drain is minimal, and you can leave the camera "on" (with the lens cover open) all day without worry. During a week of typical use that included taking several pictures a day and using both the flash and LCD for some of them, downloading the pictures to a computer, and playing with the setting menus, we used up only about half the available juice, according to the indicator.

The images produced by the D-510 were among the best-looking of those we obtained using these five cameras. The camera's all-glass lens and intelligent metering system provide users with useful tools for capturing detailed, well-exposed shots. Even in fully automatic exposure mode, the D-510 capably handled difficult tasks such as shooting trees against a bright sky, capturing indoor scenes without the flash, and macro focusing. The camera also lets you download your photos to your PC via the USB port without installing any additional software.

The D-510's controls are divided between a menu system and a four-way

arrow pad. You won't find any of the preset scene modes of the D-510's peers, but the menus provide a useful selection of advanced features, such as spot metering, exposure compensation, and white-balance controls. The delay between shots is a relatively fast 2 seconds at full resolution, although it can last as long as 8 to 10 seconds if the internal buffer fills up, which happens after just two or three shots at maximum resolution. There's also a video mode that lets you shoot about 15 seconds of silent 320-by-240 video.

The D-510 is a terrific choice among 2-megapixel point-and-shoot cameras. If you can overlook its cumbersome shutdown procedure, you won't be disappointed.

SONY CYBER-SHOT DSC-P50

EDITORS' RATING 7.6

PROS: Sharp images; convenient control placement; uses standard or rechargeable batteries; entertaining effects

CONS: No manual-exposure options; paltry 4MB Memory Stick; no slow shutter speeds in normal mode

With an average price of \$371, the 2.1-megapixel Sony Cyber-shot DSC-P50 gives you a lot of camera for the money. Although it's a bit shorter on exposure options than many of its competitors, the DSC-P50 compensates with a great macro mode, extended video capture, and creative effects.

The camera is comfortable to hold, with controls placed where you need them. Selecting LCD-menu options with the five-way button requires a steady hand, but you can easily navigate the menu system itself. Unlike other cameras in its class, the DSC-P50's 3x

MIGHTIER MEGAPIXELS

Epson PhotoPC 3100Z

Hobbyists and business users alike will love the 3.3-megapixel Epson PhotoPC 3100Z for its outstanding image quality, fast performance, and ample battery life. The 3100Z also has a dedicated button for marking images for printing. Images displayed superior detail in both bright areas and shadows, and sharp edges in shots with strong contrasts. In fact, our editors liked this camera so much, it earned a place among our 2001 Top 100 picks.

www.epson.com

Average Price: **\$711** 34980

Weight: 1.1 pounds

Storage: CompactFlash Type I, 16MB



Fujifilm FinePix 6900 Zoom

The 3.3-megapixel Fujifilm FinePix 6900 Zoom, with a full set of manual controls, targets photo enthusiasts. The camera works best for indoor and outdoor portraiture, however, because it lacks the speed for catching fast action shots. The 6900 produced images with brilliantly rendered color, though some high-contrast shots showed bleeding. Consumers looking for a combination of flexibility and functionality, and who can deal with its few drawbacks, won't go wrong with the 6900.

www.fujifilm.com

Average Price: **\$842** 34981

Weight: 1 pound

Storage: SmartMedia, 16MB



Minolta Dimage 7

The 5.2-megapixel Minolta Dimage 7 boasts the highest optical resolution of any consumer camera available today, but it also has flaws that include a grainy viewfinder, overheating, and pictures that looked dull until we ran them through Minolta's Image Viewer Utility software. Nevertheless, if you're looking for mega-resolution in an easy-to-use camera with a bevy of features, the Dimage 7 is the camera for you.

www.minolta.com

Average Price: **\$1,382** 34982

Weight: 1.2 pounds

Storage: CompactFlash Type I and II, 16MB



zoom lens doesn't extend outside the camera body, giving it a more rugged feel. The zooming optical viewfinder is clear, but it only displays about 70 percent of what the lens captures, so most users will probably opt to use the bright and accurate LCD viewfinder.

The DSC-P50 has an outstanding macro mode that lets you get within 1.2 inches of your subject. It also lets you apply solarization or color-reversal effects to your images, or save photos in sepia or black-and-white. The camera's MPEG-EX mode puts the measly video features of most other digi-cams to shame by letting you record 320-by-240 or 160-by-112 clips up to the full capacity of your Memory Stick. Unfortunately, the anemic 4MB Memory Stick that's included will max out with just 2 minutes and 41 seconds of 160-by-112 video.

Still-image quality is also quite good. The brightest highlights tend to get blown out, but overall the DSC-P50 captures well-exposed, detailed images. When we used the automatic white-balance setting with daylight, tungsten light, or the built-in flash, the color balance was right on the money. The DSC-P50's slowest shutter speed in Auto mode is a limiting 1/30 second. But its Twilight mode allows for exposures of up to 2 seconds when shooting in very low light.

We tested the DSC-P50 with Sony's optional rechargeable InfoLithium battery pack. When we ran out of power, we were able to pop in some alka-

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line batteries and keep on shooting. The camera is a fast shooter, too. Although it has the brief shutter delay typical for its class, it starts up in a speedy 3 seconds and achieves a fast shot-to-shot time of about 4 seconds.

With a reasonable price, easy operation, and excellent image quality, the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-P50 is a good buy for anyone who wants to shoot sharp, colorful pictures without breaking the bank.

BIG SHOTS

Whether you're looking for a smooth introduction to advanced digital-photography features or a point-and-shoot 35mm alternative, one of these cameras should suit you.

If you merely want to take some snapshots without a major learning curve, aim for the Kodak DX3500. This camera is about as tricky to use as your average toaster and offers an almost seamless transition between film and digital point-and-shoot cameras. If you like simplicity but also want some entertaining features, check out Sony's Cyber-shot DSC-P50.

Both the Nikon and Olympus models provide an excellent balance of automatic features and imaging flexibility for casual shooters who want to hone their photographic skills. These cameras also give you the tools you need when you're ready to exert some creative control over your images.

Our Editors' Choice is the Canon PowerShot A20. Not only does it offer easy automatic shooting and a flexible feature set, but it also does a great job with the finer points of image quality and outpaces its peers in shooting speed. ▼

< PRODUCT SUMMARY >

EDITORS' RATING (Rated 1 to 10)	7.8	7.1	7.5	7.6	7.6
PRODUCT	Canon PowerShot A20	Kodak DX3500	Nikon Coolpix 775	Olympus Camedia D-510 Zoom	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-P50
COMPANY	Canon U.S.A. 800-828-4040 www.usa.canon.com	Eastman Kodak 800-235-6325 www.kodak.com	Nikon 800-645-6689 www.nikonusa.com	Olympus America 800-622-6372 www.olympus.com	Sony Electronics 800-222-7669 www.sony.com
AVERAGE PRICE	\$362 34888	\$255 34889	\$406 34890	\$348 34891	\$371 34892
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Nikon Coolpix 995

Like other digital cameras in the 900 series, the 3.34-megapixel Nikon Coolpix 995 is distinguished by its ability to swivel the lens separately from the LCD viewfinder. It produces sharp, noise-free images, even in close-ups. Unfortunately, image quality degrades under certain shooting conditions, such as dim indoor lighting. The 995 also has a convoluted interface that obscures some important features, including white balance. Although the camera offers an excellent design overall, its flaws may turn off some users.

www.nikon.com

Average Price: \$769 **34983**

Weight: 13.8 ounces

Storage: CompactFlash Type I and II, 16MB

Sony DSC-S85

There's a lot to love about the 4.1-megapixel Sony DSC-S85. A high-quality Zeiss lens fronts it, and all the camera's functions are easily accessible. In addition, it provides excellent macro capabilities: You can shoot a subject from just an inch away. Although outdoor images were clear and lush, the DSC-S85 performed disappointingly in low-light situations. Overall, the DSC-S85's image quality and feature set are ideally suited for outdoor photography enthusiasts.

www.sony.com

Average Price: \$726 **34984**

Weight: 1 pound

Storage: Memory Stick, 16MB

Toshiba PDR-M81

Toshiba moves into the 4-megapixel market with the PDR-M81. This camera has well-organized and intuitive menus, but its function button is small. Images displayed some barrel distortion with the lens zoomed to its widest setting, but the PDR-M81's automatic white balance produced accurate colors under most lighting conditions. Finally, while the camera's features lend themselves to action photography, its shutter lag and slow recycle time are impediments to rapid shooting.

www.toshiba.com

Average Price: \$725 **34985**

Weight: 8.5 ounces

Storage: SmartMedia, 8MB





Seize Control

Get a grip on a controller that's right for the games you play.

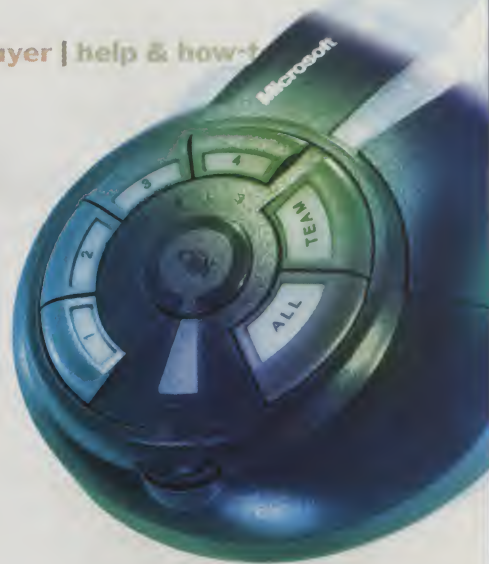
BY DENNY ATKIN

THE RIGHT GAME CONTROLLER CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOU. Imagine, for instance, dogfighting in an F-14 Tomcat with only a keyboard to navigate, throttle up, and return fire. Fighter pilots don't navigate with a numeric keypad, so why should you?

Fortunately, you don't have to. With the variety of game controllers on the market today, there's no excuse for inadequate control. No matter what kind of games you play, an array of gamepads, joysticks, wheels, and other controllers can give you an edge. Here's an overview of the controller you need to keep you on top of your game and commander of the skies.

KING OF CONTROLLERS

In the halcyon days of the Commodore 64 and Atari 800, the joystick was the king of controllers. Today, the more compact gamepad holds that title. These handheld controllers are relatively inexpensive, and they're easy to stuff under your desk when not in use (or, gotcha, when the boss sneaks up behind you). And they're familiar to the Nintendo/PlayStation generation, which makes them handy when you're desperate enough



Microsoft SideWinder
Strategic Commander

to challenge the neighbor kid to get a live opponent for Madden NFL 2002. Gamepads are particularly well-suited for sports games, classic arcade games such as Pac-Man, and console-style action games like Oddworld.

Baseball fans will be happy to know that the best gamepad out there for America's favorite pastime costs about the same as a nosebleed-seat ticket to the real deal. The Gravis Eliminator GamePad Pro USB (\$19.99) isn't programmable, nor is it tricked out with any extra features. But its 10 action buttons include four main keys in a diamond layout, making it perfect for quickly selecting a base to throw to in games like High Heat Major League Baseball 2002.

For an extra edge, check out Microsoft's SideWinder Game Pad Pro (\$34.95). As you'd expect from a Microsoft product, it's supported out of the box by almost every game. Serious players will ignore the defaults and use the SideWinder Game Controller Software to assign multiple key presses to any button, setting up combo moves that can be activated with a single tap. In addition, a shift button lets you double the number of available functions. The Game Pad Pro can serve as a standard eight-direction digital gamepad, or you can switch it into proportional mode to deliver full joystick-like 360-degree control.

Need flexibility? You'll want to look into one of the many newer gamepads that clone the design of the PlayStation 2's Dual Shock controller. These include a directional pad and a pair of small analog "thumb sticks" in addition to the usual set of buttons and triggers. Logitech's WingMan RumblePad (\$29.95) is an excellent choice if you want a programmable multipurpose controller for all kinds of games. In addition to the aforementioned pad and joysticks, it also includes a throttle slider, handy for flight and driving games. Like the Dual

Shock, it offers vibrational "rumble" feedback in supported games, giving the controller a little jolt to simulate onscreen action. For added coolness, Logitech has just released a cordless version.

The king of the gamepad hill is Thrustmaster's FireStorm Dual Power Gamepad (\$29.99). Its design is the most comfortable of any gamepad we've used, thanks to its rubberized grip and supremely logical button layout. Six of the keys are triggers that wait under your fingers as you grip the gamepad, with the remaining four arranged in a diamond opposite the directional pad. (This means only your thumb has to hit more than one button.) Keys can be programmed to emulate multiple key presses, and the gamepad can even act as a mouse. One minor gripe: The buttons aren't labeled. The FireStorm also includes dual thumb sticks but no throttle. It has force feedback, but the effect is much less dramatic than it is with a joystick or steering wheel, and little different from similar rumble functions in other gamepads.

THE JOY OF FLYING

Joysticks are still the controllers of choice for flight simulators and space-action games like LucasArts' Star Wars: X-Wing

Thrustmaster FireStorm
Dual Power Gamepad

series. They also work well in driving games, although maneuvering a car with a stick takes a bit of getting used to. Because gamepads have replaced them as general-purpose controllers, today's joysticks are usually equipped with flight- and space-simulator-oriented functions.

Take, for instance, Saitek's Cyborg 3D USB Gold (\$39.95). In addition to eight programmable buttons and a large, comfortable control stick, the Cyborg 3D also has a throttle control, a hat control for changing views, and a third "twist" axis that emulates rudder pedals. It's loaded with everything you'll need for keyboard-free air and space combat.

For a more elaborate setup, check out a stick/throttle combo such as Thrustmaster's

Thrustmaster Top Gun
Fox 2 Pro Joystick

Gamepads

	Direct Price	Price It!	Find Out More
Gravis Eliminator GamePad Pro USB	\$19.99	34861	www.gravis.com
Logitech WingMan RumblePad	\$29.95	34862	www.logitech.com
Microsoft SideWinder Game Pad Pro	\$34.95	34863	www.microsoft.com
Thrustmaster FireStorm Dual Power Gamepad	\$29.99	34864	www.thrustmaster.com

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Top Gun AfterBurner II (\$59.99). This programmable joystick is packed with buttons that enable you to assign up to 60 functions at your fingertips. The throttle can detach from the side of the joystick, enabling you to position the stick and throttle on opposite sides of your desk or chair to achieve truly aircraftlike control. This stick/throttle combo offers functionality that used to cost well over \$100.

Joysticks

	Direct Price	Price It!	Find Out More
CH Products Flight Sim Yoke USB	\$149.95	34865	www.chproducts.com
CH Products F-16 CombatStick USB	\$74.95	34866	www.chproducts.com
CH Products Pro Pedals USB	\$149.95	34879	www.chproducts.com
CH Products Pro Throttle USB	\$149.95	34867	www.chproducts.com
Gravis Destroyer AfterShock Rumble	\$29.99	34868	www.gravis.com
Logitech WingMan Force 3D	\$59.95	34869	www.logitech.com
Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback 2	\$109	34870	www.microsoft.com
Saitek Cyborg 3D USB Gold	\$39.95	34871	www.saitekusa.com
Thrustmaster Top Gun AfterBurner II	\$59.99	34872	www.thrustmaster.com

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If you want the full-blown flight experience and don't mind dropping a bundle, CH Products has the controller for you. The core of the setup is the Pro Throttle USB (\$149.95), an aircraftlike throttle outfitted with four directional hats, three fire buttons, and a mini joystick that can double as a mouse control. The drivers for this throttle can combine other CH Products controllers into a single Windows device, allowing you to use separate throttle, joystick, and rudder-



Logitech Driving Force

pedal controllers even with older games that don't recognize multiple devices. Plug in the Pro Throttle USB, an F-16 CombatStick USB (\$74.95), and the Pro Pedals USB rudder controller (\$149.95), and you'll have as close to an authentic jet-fighter control setup as you can get without enlisting.

Some gamers prefer civilian piloting. For them, the CH Products Flight Sim Yoke USB (\$149.95) is the most authentic control setup this side of a Cessna dealer. This flight yoke (the steering-wheel-like controller found in civilian planes) includes a

SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO GAMING DEVICES

throttle, mixture and propeller levers, flap and gear switches, and a number of other controls. Team it with CH's rudder pedals for the full effect.

A less expensive tool for beefing up realism is a force-feedback joystick, which simulates the control forces that you encounter



Microsoft Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer

switch put all your car's functions at your fingertips, and gas and brake pedals complete the setup.

Logitech's new Driving Force (\$99.95) setup solves the problem of finding a place to clamp the wheel down. It includes a lap attachment that lets you hold the wheel between your legs as you play. The Driving Force also includes accelerator and brake pedals, and an integrated directional pad.

Get in Gear

Which controller is right for you? It varies by game, but here's a general guide to matching a controller with your game preference. Mileage—and high scores—may vary.

Classic arcade	Gamepad
Driving	Steering wheel or joystick
First-person shooter	Mouse and keyboard
Flight simulators	Joystick or yoke
Role-playing	Mouse and keyboard, Strategic Commander
Space action	Joystick
Sports	Gamepad
Strategy	Mouse and keyboard, Strategic Commander
Third-person action	Gamepad, mouse and keyboard

THE BASICS

Keyboards and mice are often overlooked as game controllers, but they come into play in just about every game. For 3D shooters like Quake III Arena and Tribes 2, they're the controllers of choice. If you play these types of games, be sure your everyday input devices have what it takes.

First, you want a USB mouse. That's because all but the least expensive USB mice offer much better precision than PS/2-port

RACING WHEELS

Driving games and steering-wheel controllers go together like Mazda Miatas and curvy roads. While you can make do with a joystick or even an analog gamepad, serious gamers will find a wheel drives the experience much closer to reality. For the full effect, spend the few extra bucks to get a wheel with force-feedback support.

Available in both NASCAR (\$99.99) and Ferrari (\$129.95) models, depending on whether you prefer Bud Light or champagne at the racetrack, Thrustmaster's Force Feedback Racing Wheel sports a shift lever (up and down only, rather than a full shift pattern) in addition to the usual complement of buttons and switches. An eight-way view control and a four-way secondary

Steering-Wheel Controllers

	Direct Price	Price It!	Find Out More
Logitech Driving Force	\$99.95	34873	www.logitech.com
Thrustmaster Force Feedback Racing Wheel	\$129.95	34874	www.thrustmaster.com

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models. A gamer favorite is Microsoft's IntelliMouse Explorer (\$54.95), which provides accurate tracking, a wheel (great for changing weapons), and four programmable buttons. Best of all, its optical design means there's no mouse ball to get dirty and foul up your game. The new Wireless IntelliMouse

SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO GAMING DEVICES

The company's Game Voice (\$49.95) is designed to let you control games using verbal commands. It works well enough, albeit with a tiny delay; we found it most useful

Keyboards and Mice

	Direct Price	Price It!	Find Out More
Logitech iFeel Mouse	\$39.95	34875	www.logitech.com
Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer	\$54.95	34876	www.microsoft.com
Microsoft Office Keyboard	\$64.95	34877	www.microsoft.com
Microsoft Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer	\$74.95	34878	www.microsoft.com

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Explorer (\$74.95) eliminates the chance of a fatal cord tangle during a deathmatch and includes new driver software that lets you program buttons to send key presses.

Logitech offers a force-feedback USB optical mouse, the iFeel Mouse (\$39.95). Although it's a fine basic mouse for gaming use, the force feedback feels gimmicky and is supported by only a few programs.

For keyboards, the only real concern is that you stick with a standard layout. You'll want separate page-movement keys and a standard inverted-T cursor pad. Avoid unusual layouts—the simple relocation of the Insert key on Microsoft's new Office Keyboard (\$64.95) plays havoc with the logic of the keyboard layout in many flight simulators, for instance.

CONTROL FREAKS

Over the years, a number of nontraditional, specialized game controllers have been introduced. Some, such as the bizarre Space Orb, have justifiably faded into obscurity. Others, though, are worth consideration.

Microsoft includes a number of unusual models in its SideWinder line. The Freestyle Pro (\$54.95) is a gamepad that you can control by tilting the controller. It's a must for motorcycle racers, but for other genres you'll just end up using it as a gamepad.

Specialized Controllers

	Direct Price	Price It!	Find Out More
Microsoft SideWinder Freestyle Pro	\$54.95	34880	www.microsoft.com
Microsoft SideWinder Game Voice	\$49.95	34881	www.microsoft.com
Microsoft SideWinder Strategic Commander	\$49.95	34882	www.microsoft.com
Saitek GM2 Action Pad and Game Mouse	\$49.95	34883	www.saitekusa.com
Saitek P8000 Command Pad	\$49.95	34884	www.saitekusa.com

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for voice communication in games.

The Microsoft's SideWinder Strategic Commander (\$49.95) is an unusual 3D controller that has several buttons and a sort of "mouse on a pedestal" design. It was creat-

Do You Need the Force?

Force-feedback technology employs small motors in a controller to actually "pull" on the joystick or steering wheel. For instance, a force-feedback joystick will resist when you try to pull out of a dive in a flight sim, a force-feedback wheel lets you feel the curves in driving games, and firing guns will cause a force controller to recoil.

The value of force feedback varies by the controller type. In gamepads, it's mostly a gimmick. For joysticks, it's a nice extra, especially in flight sims. For driving wheels, though, it should be manda-

tory. The realistic forces on the wheel significantly enhance the gaming experience.

Note that some controllers mention rumble features. This is not the same as force feedback: Rumble support merely causes the controller to vibrate. Rumble features are fine for gamepads, but in joysticks such as the Gravis Destroyer AfterShock, they're just a gimmick and add little to gameplay.



Thrustmaster NASCAR Pro Force Feedback Racing Wheel

wheels, no movement axes. While the Game Mouse offers a four-way switch on the side to put additional commands within thumb's reach, it uses a mouse ball instead of optical technology. ▼

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Fortunately, there is the gift of software. Today's titles encompass an enormous range of subjects, letting you take care of everyone on your holiday list. For example, an avid reader and wordsmith might delight in computer-based crossword puzzles, while a social butterfly with an active imagination is likely to enjoy the communal rewards of an online role-playing game. Or if you know someone who has recently bought a new computer peripheral, you could tailor the purchase to the device. That digital camera, digital camcorder, or inkjet printer might prove a perfect match for a photo-library, video-editing, or greeting-card program.

As a gift, software has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the packages are usually small and lightweight, so they're easy to wrap and ship. They're also readily available both online and at the mall. On the downside, some retailers don't offer exchanges or refunds on software, so you may want to ask about the return policy in case your package doesn't please.

But at least with software, you've got a better shot; with a traditional tie or scarf, you're more likely to miss the mark entirely.

These 39 shrink-wrapped apps should please even the pickiest people on your holiday list.

by David English



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KG7-Lite129
KG7-RAID169

ASUS

ATV133-WA (with sound)119
ATA266-WA (with sound)139
ATM266159
ATV266199

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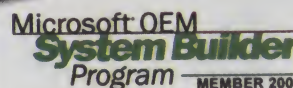
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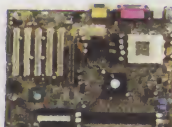
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Sierra On-Line, www.sierra.com	
EverQuest • \$9.99	34905
EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark \$29.99	34906
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Sony Online Entertainment, www.station.com	
GoBack 3 Deluxe • \$49.95	34908
Roxio, www.roxio.com	
Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002 \$74.95	34774
Microsoft, www.encarta.msn.com/products	
Microsoft Streets & Trips 2002 • \$44.95	34909
Microsoft, www.microsoft.com/streets	
Monsters, Inc. Scream Team Training \$29.99	34910
Disney Interactive, www.disneyinteractive.com	
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Photo Express 4.0 My Scrapbook Edition \$29.95	34914
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Pocket Quicken • \$39.95	34915
LandWare, www.landware.com	
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Knowledge Adventure, www.scan-command.com	
The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack \$29.95	34917
The Sims: House Party Expansion Pack \$29.95	34489
Electronic Arts, www.thesims.ea.com	
2002 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia \$29.95	34918
Scholastic, www.scholastic.com	
VideoFactory 2.0 • \$99.95	34919
Sonic Foundry, www.sonicfoundry.com	
Virtual Drive 6 • \$44.95	34920
FarStone Technology, www.farstone.com	
WordSmith 2.0 • \$29.95	34921
Blue Nomad, www.bluenomad.com	
ZIOGolf 2 • \$29.95	34922
ZIO Interactive, www.ziosoft.com	



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Ever-expanding hard drives make computers ideal for storing tons of information. As a result, some of the most popular programs deliver easy access to book-loads of data. Whether you want to start a new business, research a historical event, or plan your summer vacation, these programs are ideal for learning.

Why narrow your selection when you can give an entire encyclopedia? Two computer-based encyclopedias offer a world of knowledge that's just a keystroke away. The \$74.95 **Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002** comprises a complete reference library that would be ideal for just about any home. Wrapped in the package are Encarta Dictionary and Thesaurus, Encarta Encyclopedia Deluxe, Encarta



Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002

Interactive World Atlas, and Encarta Africana. This version of Encarta lets you copy everything to your hard drive, so you don't have to swap discs—a convenient feature, especially now that hard drives have cleared 100GB. Scholastic's \$29.95 **2002 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia** features more than 77,000 articles from the well-respected *Grolier Encyclopedia*. Most of the articles are written by experts, so the content often delves deeper into the subject than competing products. The two-CD-ROM set includes thousands of images and Web links, as well as a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a world atlas.

Some people get lost a lot. With more than 6 million miles of roads in the United States and Canada, who can blame them? Give the gift of easy-to-understand directions with the \$44.95 **Microsoft Streets & Trips 2002**. It guides the misguided with detailed street-level maps, turn-by-turn driving instructions, 256 pushpin symbols,

points of interest, road-construction updates, and GPS support. For most routes, you simply type two addresses and print the results.

Know anyone who's itching to start a business? Help scratch that itch with Palo Alto Software's \$99.95 **Business Plan Pro 2002**. Its EasyPlan wizard will help devise a plan, then run the numbers to see if the idea makes sound financial sense. You'll find 200 sample plans that could impress almost any loan officer, making this possibly the most valuable gift you give this year.

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

With so many peripherals available for your computer, it's a great idea to give software that helps users get the most from each device. Cameras, printers, and high-end speakers rarely come with the best personal-creativity apps, but you can fill the creativity gap by giving software that maximizes the hardware's capabilities.

Two programs from Ulead Systems are a terrific match for someone with a new digital camera or an inkjet printer. The \$49.95 **Photo Express 4.0 Digital Studio Edition** yields a treasure trove of photo-enhancement tools that lets users add text effects, decorative frames, and eye-catching backgrounds. Choose from more than 600 templates to create customized greeting cards, invitations, magazine covers, and CD covers. The \$29.95 **Photo Express 4.0 My Scrapbook Edition** lets designers create one-of-a-kind scrapbook pages to share with family and friends. The program includes more than 100 templates, 30 fonts, and 300 pieces of clip art. In addition to printing pages, users can send them via e-mail or post them on the Web.

Got an aspiring moviemaker in the house? Sonic Foundry's \$99.95 **VideoFactory 2.0** is based on the company's



Blues Guitar Legends

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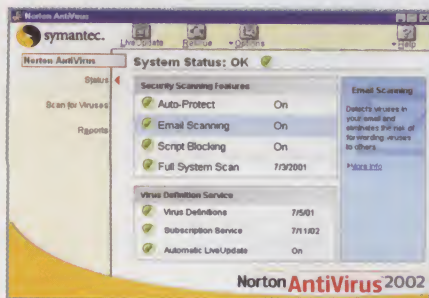
professional-quality Vegas Video but has been revamped for beginners. Amateur auteurs can add scrolling titles, video effects, and professional transitions, and then digitally pan, crop, resize, rotate, and zoom videos. They can burn Video CDs for playback on most DVD players or export to Web-friendly file formats. A wealth of images, video clips, sound effects, and music tracks lets users get started right away.

Scratch the surface of an accountant or middle manager, and what will you find? You just might uncover a blues guitarist raring to riff. The only way to know for sure is to supply your mild-mannered musician with eMedia's \$29.95 **Blues Guitar Legends**. It features 10 classic blues songs, including the likes of B.B. King's "The Thrill Is Gone" and the Allman Brothers' "Statesboro Blues." As the music plays, an animated fretboard displays the fingering positions in real time. Bring some happiness to a repressed blues guitarist this holiday season.

GEEK GOODIES

There's one in every family: someone who just can't stop tinkering with computers. For these types, no software is more appreciated than an app that helps maintain or optimize their systems. Truth be told, there's a little bit of geek in just about every computer owner, so you won't have to look very far to find an appropriate recipient.

Everyone hates viruses, but not everyone is fully protected. If your computer buff is vulnerable, now is your chance to perform a good deed by snapping up



Norton AntiVirus 2002

Symantec's \$49.95 **Norton AntiVirus 2002**, the leading antivirus program. It offers automatic e-mail scanning (including attachments), virus detection for compressed files, a quarantine system for isolating infected files, and a year of automatic updates. And that makes it the gift that keeps on giving.

For those with a very large hard drive, FarStone Technology's \$44.95 **Virtual Drive 6** lets the drive be used as one or more virtual CD-ROM drives. The program runs CD-ROM applications without the disc, so notebook users can save their favorite CD-ROM programs to the hard drive and leave the CD-ROM drive behind. Desktop users can emulate as many as 23

CD-ROM drives and never have to shuffle discs.

Oops! Can I take back that last move? Almost every computer user knows the feeling of wanting to take back a program installation, an accidental deletion, or a virus-laden download. Turn back the clock with Roxio's \$49.95 **GoBack 3 Deluxe**. By automatically saving the state of your system, it lets you recover from system crashes and restore lost data. It's an ideal gift for computer users who want to live on the edge without the risk.

moregiftsforgiving

Still stumped? Here are 16 additional titles guaranteed to please.

Audio Cleaning Lab: Optimize music recorded from LPs, cassettes, CDs, and other audio sources. You can improve your MP3 files, too. *Magix* • \$49.99 **34923**
www.magix.com

The Complete National Geographic—112 Years: Here you'll find every page of *National Geographic* magazine for more than a century, including more than 9,500 articles and 184,000 photographs. *Encore Software* • \$100 **34924**
www.encoresoftware.com

Complete 3D LandDesigner 7.0: Design your grounds or garden using 4,600 plants and 2,200 objects. Also includes a 3D deck-design program. *SierraHome* • \$69.95 **34925**
www.sierrahome.com

Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum: Get the most from your CD-R or CD-RW drive. Write CDs, convert CD tracks to MP3s, crossfade between tracks, and much more. *Roxio* • \$99.95 **34474**
www.roxio.com

Freddi Fish 5 and the Case of the Creature of Coral Cove: A mysterious sea creature is lurking inside Coral Cove Park. Find the clues and solve the puzzles. For children ages 4 to 7. *Infogrames* • \$19.95 **34927**
www.infogrames.com

Fun & Skills Pack Preschool: Includes four classic titles created for kids ages 3 to 5. Develop reading, storytelling, counting, and creativity skills. *Encore Software* • \$19.99 **34928**
www.encoresoftware.com

Home Studio 2002: Record unlimited audio and MIDI tracks, mix with real-time effects, create your own Acid-compatible loops, and print music notation. *Cakewalk* • \$129 **34929**
www.cakewalk.com

JumpStart Languages: English, French, Japanese, and Spanish exploration for children ages 3 to 6. Kids are especially receptive to languages during these early years. *Education.com* • \$19.99 **34930**
www.jumpstart.com

Lego Island 2: The Brickster's Revenge: Construct onscreen Lego buildings, machines, and creatures. Drive, sky-dive, scuba-dive, fly a plane, and ride a dinosaur as you chase the Brickster. *Lego* • \$19.99 **34931**
www.lego.com

Net Nanny 4: Filter the Internet so children won't visit sites they shouldn't. Parents can adjust the types of filtering. *Net Nanny Software* • \$39.95 **34932**
www.netnanny.com

The Princeton Review: Inside the SAT & ACT 2002 Deluxe: Take comprehensive diagnostic tests to determine your skill levels. Learn test-taking tips and techniques. *The Learning Co.* • \$24.99 **34933**
www.thelearningcompany.com

The Print Shop Deluxe 12: Using more than 230,000 images and 13,000 templates, you can make just about any kind of creative printout for any type of occasion. *The Learning Co.* • \$49.99 **34934**
www.thelearningcompany.com

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Sid Meier's Civilization III: Rewrite history in the third installment of one of the best game series of all time. Features significantly improved graphics and gameplay. *Firaxis Games* • \$49.99 **34936**
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www.randmcnally.com

Super Duper Music Looper: Music-loop editor for kids ages 6 to 10. Adapted from the professional-quality Acid Pro music-looping program. *Sonic Foundry* • \$29.95 **34938**
www.sonicfoundry.com

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SOFTWARE FOR
HOLIDAY GIVING

KID STUFF

No one appreciates a gift more than a child, and software can bring an especially broad smile by feeding the imagination, and even teaching a thing or two. Lately, the line between educational programs and kids' games has become so blurred that you may have a hard time telling them apart.

Although there aren't many new ideas in children's software, we found a good one: Knowledge Adventure's \$50 **ScanCommand: Jurassic Park** incorporates a real handheld scanner that lets a child convert any bar code into special



ScanCommand: Jurassic Park

powers for the program's onscreen dinosaurs. The creatures become stronger, smarter, and fiercer based on the bar-code labels imprinted on everyday household items. The program includes adventure elements, as well as 3D action fighting. It's recommended for kids ages 8 and older.

Imagine a simpler time, the days before *Survivor* and genetically engineered corn. Updated for contemporary audiences, but still firmly rooted in the classic children's mystery books, is Her Interactive's \$24.95 **Nancy Drew: Treasure in the Royal Tower**. The game lets players assume the identity of the world-famous teenage supersleuth, exploring a castle full of riddles and rumors, searching sealed-off rooms, and interviewing suspects. This program targets girls ages 10 and older.

What do monsters do when they're not scaring people? In Disney Interactive's \$29.99 **Monsters, Inc. Scream Team Training**, kids can plan 10 challenging activities involving the characters from Pixar's latest animated film. Feed the hungry monsters in the fast-moving cafeteria, park the monsters' cars in the grid-like parking lot, and learn scare tactics in a simulated dark bedroom. *Scream Team Training* is designed for children ages 4 to 8.

ADULTS AT PLAY

Most people claim they buy home computers for education, business, and personal productivity, yet many spend endless hours absorbed in computer games. Give in to the urge, and buy a computer game for your family or someone else's family—it will probably get more use than any other kind of software.

Online games are growing in popularity because you can interact with real people in fantasy worlds that are constantly evolving, and Sony Online Entertainment's **EverQuest** (\$9.99) is the largest and most successful online role-playing game. It supports imaginative creatures, spells, and cooperative player guilds, and also includes a one-month subscription (normally \$9.89). Add-on packs include the \$29.99 **EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark** and the \$19.99 **EverQuest: The Scars of Velious**.

Not every package is designed for action addicts, however: Even regular Joe's like to be entertained now and then. If you know someone who loves wordplay, consider giving Sierra's \$19.99 **Dell Magazines Crosswords**. It features 1,200 crossword puzzles, several skill levels, and Webster's New World College Dictionary definitions (in case you're stumped on the meaning of a word). Play singly, compete head to head with a friend, or work together to solve difficult puzzles.

You just can't keep a good simulated family down. The phenomenally popular game *The Sims* keeps expanding, and if you know someone who has the original, turn up the volume with the \$29.95 **The Sims: House Party Expansion Pack** from Electronic Arts. If your gift recipient already has that one, you could add a little sizzle with the \$29.95 **The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack**. Either way, the Sims would be guaranteed a longer and more fulfilling life.



The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack

PDA POWER

Pity the poor PDA that doesn't receive a diet of fresh software. Sure, these devices may be small, but that doesn't mean they won't become bored running the same old programs day after day. If you know an owner who has neglected the needs of a handheld, remedy the situation with a transfusion of high-energy software.

With add-on keyboards available for most Palm compatibles, many owners could use a Palm-based word processor. The best one is Blue Nomad's \$29.95 **WordSmith 2.0**, a worthy gift for anyone who uses a Palm for document editing. This latest version serves up bulleted lists, onscreen formatting (including bold, italics, and underlining), and paragraph formatting (including adjustable page breaks, indents, and line spacing).

Owners of Pocket PCs are justifiably proud of their handhelds' rich graphics. Feed that pride with ZIO Interactive's



ZIOGolf 2

\$29.95 **ZIOGolf 2**, the first full-3D golf game for the platform. Features include a 3D camera that follows the ball as you play, full aerial views, and two real-world golf courses (Hidden Valley and Sedona). There's no better way to show off the graphics power of a Pocket PC.

Wouldn't it be great if you could bring along a pocket version of *Quicken* for on-the-spot entries? That's the value of LandWare's \$39.95 **Pocket Quicken** for Palm OS handhelds. It synchronizes with your desktop version of *Quicken* to place your financial information at your fingertips. It even highlights your overdrawn accounts.

Let's see a tie or a scarf do that. ▼

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Family

by
**Kevin
Shay**

Several years ago, as the holiday season rolled around, Jeff Hirschman and his sister-in-law, Rochelle Rosales, decided to turn their seasonal shopping into a friendly wager. "We were each complaining about how much we hated going to the malls in November and December, and saying that this year, we both planned to buy as many gifts as we could online," recalls Hirschman, an engineer in California's Silicon Valley. "Somehow, this turned into 'I bet I can buy a higher percentage of my gifts online than you can!' And the gauntlet was hurled."

When the dust settled, both combatants had managed to do more than three-quarters of their gift buying via the Web. But, says Hirschman, "I won—basically by cheating. I saw a couple of CDs I wanted in Tower Records, left the store, and ordered them on CDnow." He ended up saving so much time and aggravation, he notes, that he's been a dedicated online holiday shopper ever since.

Despite the shakeout in the dot-com sector, plenty of online retailers are still vying for your business. And



**Find affordable gifts for the whole family the easy way:
on the Web.**

Values

there's no better time to let your mouse do the walking than the holiday season, when massive crowds and sold-out items can make old-fashioned shopping a miserable experience.

Our gift guide should make it even easier to find suitable presents for the whole family. The site and product listings are arranged according to which family member you're buying for. We've selected sites and potential gifts for Mom, Dad, Grandma and Grandpa, teenagers, younger kids, babies, and even your pets.

Most of the sites we'll mention specialize in a particular type of product. But don't forget about the Web's "department stores," including Amazon.com (www.amazon.com), 800.com (www.800.com), and Barnes & Noble.com (www.bn.com), which fit a broad spectrum of merchandise under one virtual roof.

Also good for general-purpose shopping are the online incarnations of actual department stores. For example, wholesale shopping club Costco is best known for its enormous warehouse stores and super-size containers of various foodstuffs, but the company's Web site (www.costco.com) carries a large selection of nonedibles at low prices. Other superstores with equally formidable online presences include Target (www.target.com), Kmart (www.bluelight.com), and Wal-Mart Stores (www.walmart.com). Each of these shops stocks many of the same items the specialty sites do, occasionally at lower prices.

Finally, while online purchasing makes procrastination easier, don't forget what shipping is like during the holidays. In other words, order as early as you can.



Mom and Apple Pie

If the woman in your life is difficult to shop for, or if you're embarrassed to be seen visiting the less masculine sections of the department store, the Web may be the perfect solution.

Online jeweler Blue Nile (www.bluenile.com) not only sells lavish engagement rings and other diamond jewelry, but also stocks a selection of affordable gift jewelry and watches. The site's Gifts \$100 and Under section features items such as a Kenneth Cole women's watch (\$95) and a sterling silver Venetian-link bracelet (\$50). A gift box and greeting card are included at no extra charge with every order. If you're in the



Uplift Tea Kettle

market for a more expensive piece of jewelry, the Product Education section will get you up to speed on diamond and precious-metal terminology and grades.

More-practical moms probably know that the Good Grips line from OXO International (www.oxo.com) is the most

acclaimed new brand of kitchen utensils to hit the market in years. Many stores devoted to housewares carry a few of these products, but OXO's online store has everything from the lemon zester to the turkey lifter, all with a distinctive soft-handled design that's both attractive and ergonomically sound. The Kitchen Utensil Set (\$55) includes six useful implements every chef is sure to need. For the tea lover, the snazzy-looking Uplift Tea Kettle (\$61) has a spout that opens automatically when you pour.

To find some unique high-tech products that make life more comfortable and convenient, visit The Sharper Image (www.sharperimage.com). The Ionic Conditioning Hair Dryer (\$39.95) not only dries hair, but "bathes hair shafts in positively charged ions," which is apparently a good thing. If Mom could use some respite from a helter-skelter schedule, she might appreciate the Original Heart & Sound Soother (\$79.95). It fills the room with your choice of six tension-reducing ambient sounds, including Ocean and Summer Night.



Do-Dads

Thinking about getting yet another necktie or sweater for the man of the house? Think again. If he likes gadgets and gizmos, you're

in luck. The Internet is practically overflowing with cool thingamajigs he'll love.

Sears.com's Tools section (www.toolterritory.com) offers hundreds of hand and power tools from Craftsman and other leading toolmakers. Within each of the well-organized tool categories, you can search by brand, price range, and character-

istics such as size and voltage. The Craftsman Pro Multi Adjustable Tool (\$59.99) is something of a Swiss Army knife on steroids; the power-hungry might get a charge out of the Makita 9.6-volt cordless drill and screwdriver kit (\$129.99).

If you're harboring a rabid NFL or NBA fan under your roof, head to Sports Fan Outlet (www.sportsfanoutlet.com). There, in addition to team clothing and memorabilia of every description, you'll find the ultimate accessory: inflatable furniture emblazoned with the colors and logo of his favorite team. Perfect for a tailgate party, backyard barbecue, or downstairs den, the armchair (\$46.99), coffee table (\$26.95), and ottoman (\$19.95) will help him get pumped up for the big game.

For the dedicated TV watcher whose fingers get tired from excessive channel surfing, Brookstone (www.brookstone.com) has the answer: the Voice

Activated Remote Control (\$50), which lets you change channels, pause the VCR, or adjust the volume ("Louder! Louder!") using the sound of your voice.

With the sheer number of sites offering computer accessories, electronics, and assorted gadgets, Dad may turn out to be the easiest member of the family to shop for online. Just remember to steer well clear of sites like AnotherNecktieOrSweater.com.



The Golden Years

The Web isn't just for whiz kids anymore. Millions of seniors also spend some of their leisure time surfing the sites. Online merchants have begun to notice, a fact you can capitalize on when shopping for gifts.

Perhaps nobody understands the importance and potential of the golden years better than the AARP (www.aarp.org), or American Association of Retired Persons. Give the grandparents a gift AARP membership (www.aarp.org/join/giftform.html) at only \$27 for three years, and they'll have access to a wide range of discounts and services.

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



PhotoPhone Amplified Big Button Phone

Researching family history is a fun and intriguing activity that the Internet has made infinitely easier. At FamilyTree-Maker.com (familytreemaker.genealogy.com) you'll find a wealth of online resources for digging into your family's past. You can also order the Beginner's Tool Kit package (\$39.99, including instructional book and video), a gift any computer-literate and historically minded grandparent is sure to appreciate.

As age takes its toll, specially designed items may make things easier. SeniorShops (www.seniorshops.com) has amassed hundreds of products that should be useful for

those with reduced vision, hearing, or mobility. The PhotoPhone Amplified Big Button Phone (\$49.95) has large speed-dial buttons that can hold small photographs, as well as amplified handset volume. The Standing Playing Card Holder (\$24.95), meanwhile, can be a boon to card players with shaky hands.

For specialty products tailored to seniors, there's no place like the Web. The same is true when it comes to gifts for that hardest-to-please demographic: teenagers.



Et Tu, Dude

Teenagers' tastes can change as quickly as the Top 10 video rotation on MTV. But online stores provide some gift options that won't be yesterday's news by the time you get them wrapped. (And you won't have to set foot in that CD shop with the really loud, horrible music.)

Video games are generally a good bet for boys of all ages. And Electronics Boutique's games site, EBgames.com (www.ebgames.com), is a good outlet for all things gaming-related. You'll find this year's hot handheld game platform, the Game Boy Advance (\$99.99), in several hues, along with games and accessories for any other gaming machine you'd care to name.

Checking It Twice, Online

A few simple rules of thumb will help make your online gift-buying experience a successful one, no matter who you're shopping for.

- ✓ **Order early.** Many people place last-minute holiday orders online. But not all vendors are equipped to handle the rush, and popular products can sell out. Past years have seen disastrous fulfillment problems for some online stores.
- ✓ **Check delivery times.** Don't assume you're safe because you're ordering two weeks ahead. Some sites may not begin processing your order for days.
- ✓ **Hedge your bets.** If you're worried about not receiving your gift orders in time, seek out a delivery guarantee. Speaking of guarantees, it's always wise to check out a site's product warranty and return policies before ordering.
- ✓ **Get a second opinion.** Several good sites provide ratings for online merchants and price comparisons for individual products. To check up on a site's reputation or find the best available deal before you buy, try Gomez.com (www.gomez.com), BizRate.com (www.bizrate.com), or DealTime (www.dealtime.com). For other customers' experiences, check Epinions.com (www.epinions.com).
- ✓ **Track it down.** UPS (www.ups.com/tracking/tracking.html), FedEx (www.fedex.com/us/tracking), and other delivery services have online package-tracking features built into their sites. Enter your tracking number (which the vendor should provide when your order ships) for the latest update on where your package is.
- ✓ **Have a backup plan.** As the past year has shown, there's no guarantee that an e-commerce site that's up and running today will be around tomorrow. (All of the sites mentioned in this article were viable at press time, but it's possible one of them will be defunct, or in another line of business, by the time you read this.)



Game Boy Advance

Movie lovers will appreciate a well-selected poster or two from Rick's Movie Graphics (www.ricksmovie.com). Search the database of thousands of movies to find full-size posters (most cost \$15 to \$30, although collectible originals can be expensive), as well as 8-by-10 photos and other publicity materials. A free catalog is available, in case the film buffs in your family want to make their own selections.

Shopping for the varsity athlete in your family is a no-brainer at Fogdog Sports (www.fogdog.com). This easily navigated site offers a vast array of equipment, clothing, footwear, and accessories. You'll find dozens of basketballs, such as the Spalding NBA Infusion (\$39.99), which is designed for both indoor and outdoor use. For the budding weightlifter, a pair of Cap Barbell's 20-pound chrome dumbbells (\$69.99) is a gift you'll be happy not to carry home from the store.



Britney or Bust

Music is likely to make an appearance on any teen's wish list. Unless you're armed with a list of specific artists and titles, howev-

er, you probably shouldn't attempt to make your own album selections for the teenage girl you're shopping for. At 800.com (www.800.com) you'll find not only CDs galore, but some related gifts that should be a hit no matter what the musical tastes of the recipient. The Case Logic Classic CD Wallet holds 264 discs and CD inserts in convenient plastic sleeves (\$49.95; other capacities are available). If a certain someone is monopolizing the family stereo, maybe it's time to give her a Sony D-F20 CD Walkman (\$69.95), which also serves as an AM/FM radio.

For beauty products with a youthful slant, browse the collection of fragrances, makeup, bath and body supplies, and accessories at Sephora.com (www.sephora.com).

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The Sephora Collection Hair Tool Kit by Mimco (\$21) is a set of hair clips, pins, barrettes, and other accessories, and comes in three different configurations and color schemes: Floral, Military, and Royal Tartan. On the self-pampering front, try the Jaqua Girls Soul Soak kit (\$29), which includes bath salts, bath gel, and floating candles.

Haunted by visions of enormous bills, many parents are reluctant to get their teenagers the wireless phones they've been clamoring for. But the



Nokia 282

nationwide prepaid service offered by TracFone Wireless (www.tracfone.com) may be a workable solution. Purchase a phone from any of the participating retailers or online vendors, such as the low-end Nokia 252C (\$19.99 after rebate, through Amazon.com) or even the more upscale Nokia 282 (\$129.99 through Amazon.com). Then the talkative recipient of your gift can prepurchase airtime as needed, either

at retail locations or directly through the TracFone site. (Some regional wireless providers also offer prepaid plans, so compare what's available in your area.) It's a gift that keeps on giving, without requiring you to keep on paying.



The Kids Are All Right

Younger children can be as difficult to satisfy as teens, but they're very good at letting you know what they want. Tired of hearing their fondest desires voiced as loudly repeated demands? A plethora of Web-based vendors can help you play Santa without the traditional point-and-beg forced march through the toy store.

If there's a young Barbie aficionado in your household, look no further than the Web site of upscale toy superstore FAO Schwarz (www.fao.com). Originally an FAO

exclusive, the Burberry Barbie (\$80) sports a miniature version of a classic Burberry of London outfit. Other cutting-edge items featured in the site's extensive Barbie store include NSYNC Barbie (\$22.99) and the limited-edition Fashion Editor Barbie (\$85).

Although eToys is no longer with us, the remains of the company have been incorporated into KBkids.com

(www.kbkids.com), the online presence of venerable bricks-and-mortar retailer KB Toys. The company stocks a full complement of Lego kits, including the futuristic Lego Technic line of action-ready robots and cars. The Lego Technic Destroyer Droid (\$54.99), with a



Lego Technic Destroyer Droid

whopping 553 pieces, should provide hours of constructive activity for older kids. For younger tinkerers, especially *Star Wars* fans, the Lego Technic C3PO (\$39.99) might be more appropriate.

One online store that specializes in toys that promote learning is Imaginarium.com (www.imaginarium.com), now part of Amazon.com. There you'll find LeapFrog's Phonics Writing Desk (\$29.99), an electronic learning tool that helps youngsters learn to read and spell as they play quiz games by pressing an alphabet keypad. And you might inspire a future Nobel contender with C&A Scientific's My First Lab Microscope (\$89.99). Imaginarium categorizes products according to seven "learning values" (such as visual, mathematical, or cooperative play), but the kids don't have to know that.



Babies' Best

If only everyone on your gift list were captivated by bright colors and spinning objects, holiday shopping would be a breeze. Babies don't try to peek at their presents in the closet or compare their loot with what their siblings got. Still, you may need to do a bit of Web footwork to track down some toys the wee one hasn't already received from another adoring relative.

For a site that makes you feel good



Whoozit

about your baby just by typing in the domain name, hunt-and-peck over to GeniusBabies.com (www.geniusbabies.com). The site carries a generous selection of Whoozits, which are safe, flexible toys with a funny face, appendages to yank, and mirrors in unexpected places. A six-piece Everything Whoozit gift package (\$69.95) should be enough to turn the crib into a veritable wonderland of developmental activity.

An infant won't complain if a couple of her "gifts" are really for her parents, so take advantage of that fact while she's still young. BabyAge.com (www.babyage.com) specializes in nursery furniture, strollers, car seats, high chairs, nursing accessories, and other useful baby-care items. The Snugli Comfort Supreme Baby Carrier (\$45.99) lets baby travel in luxury, affixed to Mom's or Dad's chest, facing either in or out. Or to give the gift of peace of mind, consider Graco's UltraClear Nursery Monitor (\$34.95).

Baby clothes may be outgrown in a matter of weeks, but photos of those adorable outfits can last a lifetime. At Baby Ultimate (www.babyultimate.com), you can shop for tiny brand-name wearables from dozens of makers. The aptly named What a Melon Infant Playsuit (\$29.15), from Chicken Noodle Clothing, comes in sizes for babies aged 6, 9, 12, 18, or 24 months.

Fido and Fifi

Like babies, pets aren't especially fussy or easily slighted when it comes to presents. Still, giving your four-legged companion something fun to chew on or scratch will keep him from finding something valuable to chew on or scratch (like your now-collectible Pets.com sock puppet).

Everything your canine friend's loyal

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

heart desires can be found online at SitStay.com (www.sitstay.com). With a North Paw jacket (\$49.99 to \$79.99, depending on size), your cold-weather-sensitive dog can brave the winter chill with Polartec in addition to fur. And to make that romp in the snow more fun, there's the Tennisball Slinger (\$34.95), which can launch a tennis ball up to 50 yards and holds several spare balls for when one gets particularly slimy.

Cats don't tend to do much fetching per se, but they love to watch. At CatToys.com (www.cattoys.com), the Birdwatching Kit for Cats (on sale at press time for \$14.99; regular price, \$29.99) includes a window bird feeder, a toy bird, and some catnip. To save your sofa, a Scratching Carpet (\$12.95) is available in four designs: Mouse, Bunny, Deer, and (this one's more than a little disturbing) Kitty. Sister site DogToys.com



North Paw Jacket

(www.dogtoys.com) is an equally good destination for dog owners.

The leading survivor of the online pet-supplies shakeout, PetSmart (www.petsmart.com), doesn't cater only to cats and dogs. Food, equipment, and toys for birds, fish, reptiles, and small animals can be had at the click of a mouse. For birds and those who love them, PetSmart offers the Acrobird Toddler Atrium (\$33.99), an out-of-cage jungle gym for your feathered friend. ▼

Holiday 10 Most Wanted

The 10 Tech Products Sure to Be High on Everybody's List



Handspring Visor Edge PDA (\$299 direct). With its expansion slot and thin form factor, it's the Palm OS handheld *du jour*.



Sonicblue Rio 800 (\$249.99 direct). A generous 128MB of flash memory and an eye-catching design make this digital audio player an MP3-phile's delight.



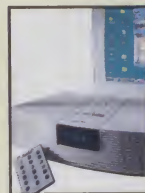
Olympus Camedia D-510 Zoom (\$399 list). One of the best of the low-cost digital cameras currently available.



Sanyo SCP-6000 (\$299 list). Lightweight and with a relatively large display, this Web-enabled cell phone points the way to the future of the wireless Web.



Franklin eBookMan 911 (\$229.95 direct). With PDA features and thousands of available books (including audio books), it's the next generation of handheld e-book readers.



Bose Wave/PC Interactive Audio System (\$449 direct). This audio system works with your PC to play CDs, MP3 files, AM/FM radio, and Web radio through those amazing tiny Bose speakers.



TiVo (\$199.99 and up, plus service). Digitally record and play back TV shows, on your own schedule. The networks are worried. The geeks are thrilled.



Sony RM-AV2100 Universal Remote Commander (\$179.99 list). In an episode of HBO's *The Sopranos*, a man died rather than give up his universal remote. This is that remote.



Garmin eMap Deluxe (\$300 list). With your own handheld global location tracker, you'll never get lost again.



Sony PlayStation 2 (\$299 list). Should be this holiday season's biggest-selling game console—if Sony can get enough of them into stores.

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ONLINE PHOTO SERVICES

Photo Finishers

Is your virtual shoebox littered with digital snapshots? Organize, edit, reprint, and share them at online photo sites.



BY RICK BROIDA

Laura Brooks has a full-time job, two children, and little spare time. But she likes to take pictures. "With regular photo labs, I have to make two trips to the drugstore—drop-off and pickup," she says. "Then, if I want to share prints, I have to squint through the set of negatives, write down the number of prints of each frame, and make two more trips to the drugstore."

Brooks learned about Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com), an online photo service, from a magazine article. She now uses it to process film, share photos with family, and order reprints and gifts. "I know what I'm getting ahead of time, and I don't have

to do anything but sit back and wait for [the photos] to arrive," she says.

Online photo services such as Shutterfly and Club Photo (www.clubphoto.com) offer simple, affordable tools for processing film and organizing, printing, sharing, even editing images.

The services' existence is a by-product of soaring digital-camera sales. By the end of 2001, digital cameras will be in more than 50 percent of U.S. households, according to an InfoTrends Research Group survey, up from 25 percent at the end of 2000. And a related InfoTrends survey revealed that current digital-camera owners expect to abandon their film cameras by 2004.

It all adds up to new ways of thinking about storing, developing, printing, and sharing pictures. And online photo sites are leading the charge.

SEE WHAT DEVELOPS

Many newcomers to digital photography shoot a few megabytes' worth of pictures, then ask, "What now?" There's no roll of film to take to the drugstore, and trying to output images on an inkjet printer is an inexact science, not to mention slow, costly, and confusing. Services such as Club Photo and Ofoto (www.ofoto.com) solve the dilemma by letting you upload photos and, with a few clicks,

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCO SANTALUCIA



order prints. These services can be particularly useful if you own a scanner and want reprints of existing photos.

Many professionals are making good use of the services, too. Mark Tannacore, a freelance artist, orders glossy prints of the artwork he uploads to Ofoto. "I don't have the equipment or the money to get high-quality proofs made of my art prints," he says. "I can get something similar from Ofoto without all the hassle."

Even shutterbugs who remain faithful to film can benefit from the perks of digital developing. Borrowing from a concept established years ago by Seattle FilmWorks, many photo sites now let you mail in rolls of 35mm film or disposable cameras, and receive digital results. Snapfish (www.snapfish.com) processes your film, places the photos in an online album, and mails you glossy or matte prints along with negatives. Club Photo, Ofoto, and Shutterfly offer similar mail-in processing ser-

vices, but don't automatically send you prints. Rather, you peruse your online album and choose only the photos you want. As for the company that paved the way, Seattle FilmWorks now operates as PhotoWorks (www.photoworks.com), and has added online albums and ordering to its business model. What's more, if you send PhotoWorks \$9.95 and up to 40 prints, you'll get back a Pictures on Disk CD with your originals.

Processing and print prices vary by site, though most services charge about 50 cents to turn pixels into 4-by-6-inch prints. DotPhoto (www.dotphoto.com) offers one of the best overall deals, with free film processing and 29-cent prints (even less if you sign up for one of several subscription plans). A more comprehensive package from Snapfish includes film processing, prints, negatives, and postage for \$3.98. Shutterfly's prices make the local drugstore's look like a bargain: \$4.79 per roll, plus 49 cents per print. At 24 prints per roll, that's more than \$16. Of course, no law

says you have to order all 24 prints, and that's part of the appeal.

THE SITE ALBUM

Many photo services are built around the online album, a collection of your photos stored on their servers. When you send a roll of film to, say, Club Photo or Snapfish, the service processes the film and places the images in an album. Almost all the services let you create custom albums into which you can upload scanned or snapped images. You can organize images by date, occasion, or any other criteria, and share the album with family and friends. Just supply the service with e-mail addresses, and it sends invitations with a link to the album. Those visitors may then order prints or photo-adorned gifts.

Photo sites say ordering prints is their most popular service. But it's the online album that provides the most valuable alter-

A Picture's Worth 1.5 Million Pixels

ONLINE PHOTO SERVICES

In the world of digital photography, resolution is everything. Suppose you upload a 1-megapixel image to your Club Photo album, then order a 5-by-7-inch print. Don't be surprised to find a coarse or blurry picture in your mailbox. A 1-megapixel image is sufficient for a 3-by-5-inch print, but nothing larger.

Fortunately, many photo sites eliminate the guesswork. Ofoto, for instance, shows the exact resolution of the photo you're viewing, as well as the maximum recommended print size. Club Photo and Shutterfly work similarly, flagging the acceptable and unacceptable print sizes for each photo based on its resolution.

When you scan a photo or snap one with your digital camera, you have control over the resolution. But what about when you send in a roll of film for processing? Most of the services return images at "4Base" resolution: 1,536 by 1,024, or about 1.5 megapixels. Most digital-camera experts will tell you a 5-by-7-inch print is as large as you should go at that resolution, but at least one service we checked offered an 8-by-10 option. This would likely result in a grainy print. So be mindful of resolution when shooting, scanning, uploading, and especially ordering photos. Higher is better.

native to traditional mail-in film processors.

"I can order only the prints I want, and at the same time order a different set for my mom and have them sent directly to her," Brooks says. Try that at the drugstore.

What's more, online albums mean you no longer need to keep track of impossible-to-catalog negatives because your "proofs" are always available online.

"Because they're stored on the Web, you

the day" features without permission.

"Anybody can order a print of your photo regardless of whether you own the copyright, and you make zero off it," he says. If you have concerns over the privacy of your images, be sure to read the site's terms-of-service disclaimer.

Another concern is that people you invite to view your album may then invite others to do the same, eventually resulting in unwanted visitors (those Waikiki beach photos weren't meant for your cousin's boss's brother's chiropractor). Fortunately, some services take steps to prevent this kind of unwanted networking. Snapfish, for instance, lets you specify whether others may share the album you're sharing with them.

For Robert Baker, a professional photographer, the main concern is the service going out of business and taking all his photos with it. For that reason, he prefers to archive his images. "I do not have enough faith that these 'free' services will be around long enough," he says. "With the ease and low cost of burning CDs, I just inventory my images on CD and then in the filing cabinet."

That approach is less practical if you're not starting with digital images. For those who send rolls of film for processing, many services now offer archive CDs. Specify which photos or albums you want,

and the service will put high-resolution versions on a CD. PhotoWorks takes it a step further by offering a multimedia-enriched photo DVD.

Prices vary by service. Club Photo's 60-picture Album CD costs \$7.95; the price of Ofoto's Archive CD depends on the number of photos you want (\$9.95 for up to 50, \$19.95 for up to 250, and so on).

For some, prints are only half the equation. They also want to download their processed photos, preferably at high resolutions. Club Photo, Ofoto, and Shutterfly are among the services that scan processed film at 1,536 by 1,024, a resolution sufficient for 8-by-10 prints. However, the services' download policies vary. Club Photo, for instance, lets you download medium-resolution 800-by-600 photos free, but you'll need a premium membership to download high-resolution versions. Ofoto and Shutterfly have no provision for downloading photos at all; prints are your only option.

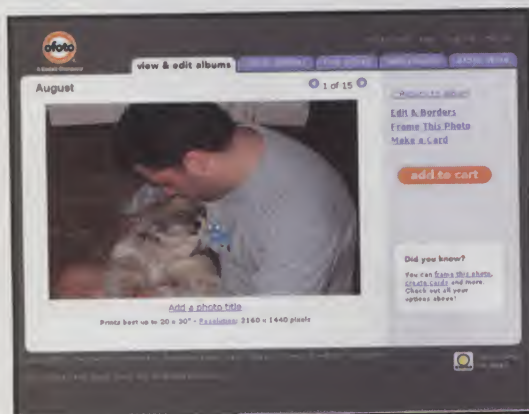
Finally, there's the storage issue. Most services impose a restriction of some kind. Club Photo places a 90-day time limit on your albums unless you pay for a premium membership. DotPhoto limits free storage to a year, and Shutterfly has a 50MB cap.

Shute, who uses PhotoBox, takes issue with the storage ceiling. "Fifty megabytes of

Finishing Up

Which online photo service is the one for you? We compared five of our favorites.

	Club Photo www.clubphoto.com
Processing (35mm Film, 4-by-6 Prints)	\$1 per roll
Reprint Price (4-by-6 Prints)	45 cents
Annual Membership Fee	None (basic); \$24.95 (Gold); \$34.95 (Platinum)
Storage Space	Unlimited (basic albums expire after 90 days)
Gifts Available	Baked goods, clothing, desk accessories, jewelry, posters
Photo Downloads	Free (premium membership enables high-res downloads)
Editing tools	Brighten, darken, rotate
Special Features	Free photo-album software for Palm-powered handhelds



Ofoto

don't have to worry about the roll going missing," notes Allen Shute, a user of PhotoBox (www.photobox.co.uk).

Most services keep your albums private, letting only those you invite view them. But some, such as Webshots (www.webshots.com), make your albums publicly viewable unless you specifically tag them as private. This fact has discouraged users such as Tannacore, who accuses online photo services of borrowing photos for "picture of

Web space seems like a lot until you start to put some pictures on the site and realize how much space you use in a short time," he says.

Some services give you no free space at all. Storing images at PhotoPoint (www.photopoint.com) will cost you \$19.95 per year, and that's for just 250 images.

THE FIX IS IN

Storage shortcomings aside, photo-sharing sites offer other benefits you just can't get at the corner drugstore. With a film camera and traditional processing, a bad picture is a bad picture. There's not much you can do about, say, red-eye or poor lighting, except perhaps scan the photo into your PC and try to tweak it with image-editing software. You'll have to supply the software, expertise, and patience. Most online photo sites, however, provide tools for making simple or sometimes sophisticated fixes to your pictures before you spend money on prints.

Shutterfly includes easy-to-use tools for removing red-eye, cropping and rotating photos, and adding special effects and borders. The site offers more than 100 such borders, from basic edges to special-occasion designs to monthly calendars. Ofoto offers a similar set of options, including a manual zoom-and-trim feature that lets you adjust a photo's size to fill any given print size—an important feature because aspect ratios don't always match.

Capable as many of these tools are, you may still prefer to edit images, be they digital or scanned, on your own PC using

ONLINE PHOTO SERVICES

image-editing software. Free versions of ArcSoft PhotoStudio 2000 and PhotoPrinter are available from PhotoIsland (www.photoisland.com). Such software gives you greater control over editing tools such as cropping, color adjustment, and special effects, and lets you make your own prints. But you have nothing to lose by experimenting with the sites' built-in tools. They're fast, easy to use, and generally much more convenient than their offline counterparts.

At DotPhoto, you can modify images in a way no other service matches: with voice annotations. After you download a handful of browser components, you simply record a note on your PC ("Here we are at Mount Rushmore!"), then upload the sound file and attach it to the photo.

MOUSE PADS AND MORE

These sites go beyond your basic reprints in other ways, too. Keepsake plates are just one of the photo-adorned goodies you can order at Club Photo, which has perhaps the widest array of gifts of any photo site. Aside from the usual extras such as frames and birth announcements, Club Photo's selection includes mouse pads, checks, puzzles, a paint-by-number kit, mugs, and—no fooling—baked goods. You can have just about



Club Photo

any photo plastered onto chocolate cards, cookies, lollipops, even Rice Krispies bars. PhotoWorks carries an equally diverse assortment of gift items, including clocks, tote bags, and Rubik's Cubes.

Brooks is partial to Shutterfly's Snapbooks. These are spiral-bound, matte-finish collections of photos—up to 30 of them in either 4-by-6 or 5-by-7 sizes—with captions you supply. "I got one for my mom and one for myself," she says. "I carry mine in my purse to replace wallet photos." The Mother's Day gift, filled mostly with pictures of the grandkids, was a big hit, she adds.

PICTURE IT ONLINE

Perhaps the best aspect of online photo sites is that you have little to lose by giving them a try. With the exception of PhotoPoint and a few others, the services let you create albums for free. You can upload a few photos and have prints made for just a few dollars—and the whole process takes no more than 10 or 15 minutes.

Settling on a particular service boils down to what you value most: sophisticated image-editing tools (Ofoto), inexpensive photo processing (DotPhoto or Snapfish), effortless albums (Shutterfly), or lots of cool gifts (Club Photo). Of course, every service has its high and low points, but they all succeed when it comes to saving you time, money, and photos ruined by red-eye. ▼

DotPhoto www.dotphoto.com	Ofoto www.ofoto.com	Shutterfly www.shutterfly.com	Snapfish www.snapfish.com
Free (up to one roll per month)	\$2.95 per roll	\$4.79 per roll	\$3.98 per roll, prints included
29 cents (19 cents for members)	49 cents	49 cents	59 cents
None (monthly plans)	None	None	None
Unlimited for one year (thereafter, upload one photo per month, or spend \$5 every six months)	Unlimited	50MB	60MB
None	Frames, greeting cards, photo-insert cards	Frames, greeting cards, Snapbooks	Greeting cards, postcards
No	No	No	89 cents each (volume discounts available)
None	Borders, crop, lighting adjustment, mirror, red-eye removal, rotate, special effects	Borders, crop, red-eye removal, special effects	Crop, color adjustment, red-eye removal, rotate
60 free prints when you register; photo voice annotations	15 free prints when you register; free editing/uploading software	15 free prints when you register; ship one order to multiple addresses	One-click uploads to Ceiva frames; 10 free prints if you upload pics

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- GeForce2 AGP Video Card with 32MB
- 56K V.90 FaxModem
- 10/100 Network Adapter
- Wavetable Audio
- Keyboard Mail Windows Keyboard with Internet Hot Keys
- Scrolling Wheel Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP—the home version of the world's favorite software
- 6-Bay Case/250 Watt P/S
- Premium One Year Part and Labor On-Site Warranty
- TigerSoftware™ Tools (see below)
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AMD Athlon™ XP

1500+

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- 16X DVD
- 16x10x32 CD-RW¹
- GeForce2 MX 200 AGP Video w/32MB
- 10/100 Network Adapter
- Wavetable Sound
- 3-pc. Speaker System w/subwoofer
- Microsoft Windows XP Pre-loaded

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1. CD-ROM speeds are variable; maximum speeds shown. 2. Actual speeds may vary; capable of 56Kbps but due to FCC regulations download speeds are limited to 53Kbps. 3. QuantiSpeed™ architecture operates at 1.33GHz for the 1500+ and 1.467GHz for the 1700+. See www.tigerdirect.com/warranty for complete details of all warranty policies. Prices subject to change. PRN 1201

WebBuyer

Fast Relief For Slow Shoppers

These sites rescue last-minute shoppers with speedy delivery.

BY ELAINE X. GRANT

While your holiday shopping list remains an unheeded to-do item on your PDA, other people have already selected and wrapped the perfect holiday present for their every friend, relative, and pet. If you're one of those annoyingly organized people, you can stop reading right now.

Okay, now that we've gotten rid of those freaks, let's talk about the rest of us. For most people, the holiday season is filled not only with fattening food and family arguments, but also moments of panic as we realize at the last minute that we forgot a gift for that uncle six states away. Sound familiar? If so, fire up your browser and check out these solutions to last-minute shopping woes.

For superfast delivery, try the Express Gifts section of **RedEnvelope** (www.redenvelope.com), where gifts ordered by midnight (ET) arrive overnight. The site has a wide selection of givables that are fun and hedonistic. (Perhaps a \$100 Full-Body Massage Mat, a \$30 Zen Stone Garden, or a \$25 Monogrammed Silver-Plated Mouse?)

MSN eShop (eshop.msn.com) has revived its Procrastinator's Guide for the 2001 holiday season after a year's hiatus. Available at **holidays.msn.com** from December 17 through Christmas, it will feature up to 20 MSN merchants, and include last-minute ordering deadlines, shipping policies, and gift suggestions. MSN ensures that all featured products are in stock and available for immediate shipping.



Tardy technophiles take note: 800.com delivers the ultimate in home electronics and entertainment in practically no time.

High-tech entertainment or electronics what you're after? Try **800.com** (www.800.com). The site doesn't offer a nifty automated gift finder as some other gift-oriented sites do; instead it features live online help from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (PT) weekdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (PT) weekends. With just one click, you can enter chat mode with an 800.com representative, who can answer your questions and even help you select a gift from a wide array of movies, music, digital cameras, wireless phones, home and car stereo equipment, and video games. If you prefer advice from fellow shoppers, the site also offers forums where gift givers can talk to one another and gather advice on specific products. Shipping costs vary, but if you need a gift pronto, 800.com can deliver your order in as little as two business days.

Those looking to give the gift of tech in the form of computers, peripherals, or electronic gadgets should take their credit cards to **CircuitCity.com**. The company will deliver a gift the next business day if you place your order by 1 p.m. (ET), or you can order online and pick the item up at a nearby store (if you're courageous enough to brave scary holiday crowds).

For the foodies in your life, **Dean & DeLuca** (www.deandeluca.com) serves up a wide selection of gift baskets, organized by price and categories such as For a Wine Enthusiast and For Someone Who Loves to Cook. Dean & DeLuca promises next-business-day delivery for an extra \$10 and guarantees delivery by December 24 for gifts ordered by December 20.

If you find yourself in dire need of a last-minute romantic gesture, a brilliant solution is to name a star after your sweetheart. (Just explain the relevance of this offbeat gift by noting that a star plays a key role in at least one December holiday.) **Name a Star** (www.nameastar.net) will let you do so for \$49.95 plus shipping, delivering a



Surprise.com suggests thoughtful and unique gift possibilities for virtually anyone on your list.

naming certificate, a map, and, for the poets out there, a tribute you write. **Star Registry** (www.starregistry.com) offers a similar service.

Finding a site with speedy delivery is only half the battle—the really hard part is deciding what to buy. **Surprise.com** (www.surprise.com) has created one of the best gift-finders on the Web, with an exhaustive list of recipients, occasions, and even personality traits. (Secret Agent Man, Has the Blues, Works Too Much, and Gadgeteer are among the categories.) The site provides detailed gift suggestions, with price ranges and hints on various places to buy.

And if you just can't get a gift delivered in time, make up for it with size. How about a humpback whale? For just \$25, you can adopt one of these massive beasts as a gift at The Whale Adoption Project (www.whaleadoption.org). The recipient gets an adoption certificate, a photo and description of the sponsored whale, and a one-year subscription to a quarterly newsletter.

For the tougher ones on your list, like my mother-in-law, for whom it is so impossible to buy that cash is the only viable alternative, make **GiftCertificates.com** (www.giftcertificates.com) your final stop. Here you can snap up a SuperCertificate, which is actually a gift certificate for a gift certificate, redeemable online or by phone at more than 700 merchants, including stores, airlines, hotels, and restaurants. Certificates can be mailed or sent via e-mail to the recipient.

After all, what's more last-minute than e-mail? ▼



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ELECTRONICS

WebBuyer

S I T E R E V I E W S F O R O N L I N E S H O P P I N G

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

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<Tech Shopping

aberdeeninc.com

Targeting the savvy consumer who craves speeds and feeds, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories. Custom configurators let you build a unique desktop, rackmount server, or notebook.

accessmicro.com

Access Micro stocks tons of items ranging from broadband routers to complete desktop systems. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors, and the clearance area offers returned items and old inventory for below wholesale cost.

allcables.com

Plug it in and hook it up at **AllCables**, which sells fiber-optic cables, IEEE 1394 (FireWire) cables, printer cables, power cables—cables of every description. Most include a lifetime replacement warranty.

allstarshop.com

The **Allstar Microelectronics** catalog of PC accessories includes graphics cards, motherboards, and peripherals. The selection in some categories is modest, but prices are reasonable, and you'll find an ample amount of information about each product.

batteriesdirect.com

Empower yourself! **Batteries Direct** sells batteries for laptops, camcorders, and portable phones, as well as AC adapters for portable computers. If the kids' toys are running on empty, check out the

selection of rechargeable nickel-metal-hydrate batteries in sizes ranging from AAA to D.

blackbox.com

Get connected! Specializing in network products, **Black Box's** extensive catalog of storage, cabling, and surge-protection products—plus other connectivity accessories—can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

This monstrous, multifaceted site sells computers, electronics, books, movies, office products, and more. With a whopping 1 million items, **Buy.com** offers a price-matching policy on most of them.

buycase.com

Banish the boring beige box forever! **Colorcase** offers more than 60 unusual computer cases, including translucent-plastic, aluminum, mirrored, and "character" cases. (Be sure to check out the doggy- and kitty-shaped cases.)

buydig.com

A site for shovels and trowels? No, **BuyDig.Com** offers digital tools and gadgets including digital cameras, fax machines, PDAs, DVD players, and video-capture devices.

www.buyuptime.com

BuyUptime.com's protection and security inventory includes uninterruptible power supplies and accessories, batteries, and power-distribution units. The selection ranges from simple surge protectors to industrial transformers.

cablestogo.com

Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable you might need for your PC, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find networking products, bulk cable, tools, and test equipment. You might even get lucky and snatch up what you need at a bargain price in the site's closeout section.

COMPUTER SHOPPER



half.com

Think eBay—but with instant gratification. Like the popular online-auction sites, **Half.com** is a person-to-person marketplace. Unlike other online auctions, sellers set the price at Half.com. For buyers, there's no waiting to find out if you'll get an item: Sales are first-come, first-served.

At Half.com, you won't see the selection philosophy of eBay, so

don't expect to find Beanie Babies or human kidneys. The categories are limited to music, books, movies/DVDs, video games, computers, electronics, sporting goods, and trading cards.

The media selection—books, music, movies, and games—is where the site shines. The assortment includes a mixture of new, used, recent, and ancient items, and the site is always clear about the condition of preowned items (ranging from "like new" to "acceptable") and price options. For any item, you'll usually have a choice of sellers and prices.

Half.com's flat-rate shipping policy for books, music, movies, and games means you'll avoid another auction landmine: being surprised by a seller's unrealistic expectation of shipping fees. But order holiday gifts early: Many sellers do not offer Priority Mail shipping, and the relatively slow USPS Media Mail rate is standard.

DECEMBER



SITE
REVIEWS**www.cd-recordable.com**

The U.S.-owned and -based **CD-Recordable Factory Store** actually manufactures the discs it sells. This easy-to-navigate site stocks a massive variety of CD-R discs, including colorless and tinted media, plus disc-packaging and -storage accessories.

**cdw.com**

CDW offers an enormous array of hardware and software for business. Create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories, and search out dollar-saving deals on the rebates-and-coupons page.

circotech.com

If a beautiful PC case stops you in your tracks, visit **Circo Technology**, which offers a large selection of attractive and functional cases. For the maximum in upgradability, check out the roomy "cube" cases.

compgeeks.com

Revenge of the nerds, indeed! Shop the **Computer Geeks Discount Outlet** for new, discontinued, and refurbished computer gear. It's a trove for the do-it-yourselfer piecing together a desktop system. The site features low prices and complete specs on every product.

compusa.com

The well-organized **CompUSA** rounds out the usual selection of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories with areas devoted to electronics and gadgets. The frugal won't want to overlook the site's outlet section.

computergate.com

Computer Gate promises a 30-day satisfaction return policy on its products, which include peripherals and build-to-order PCs. Check out the Quick Index: You'll never have to poke around for the right product again.

**computers4sure.com**

In the 19 well-stocked departments at **Computers4Sure.com** you'll find a broad spectrum of products, including networking equipment, PDAs, and scanners. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Clearance pages.

computersurplusoutlet.com

You're just crazy enough to build your own desktop system, aren't you? Then you'll feel right at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet**, where you'll find closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items. You might even stumble on an assembly-required Pentium system for less than \$100.

crucial.com

One of the largest providers of memory upgrades on the Web, **Crucial Technology** offers free shipping on RAM for 11,000 computer systems. The company backs its memory with a lifetime warranty.

dalco.com

Dalco Electronics stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. If you're a bargain hunter, start with the specials found on the home page. You'll also find a helpful motherboard/CPU and memory configurator.

dartek.com

Dartek sells a remarkable selection of hardware, software, networking equipment, and office furniture. Well-designed features include printable spec sheets, customers' product ratings, a product-watch feature, and a frequent-buyers' club.

directron.com

Specializing in computer peripherals, **Directron.com** offers low prices on a wide variety of name-brand and OEM products. Most items include a 30-day guarantee, and any order earns you the right to pick through the Free Stuff bin. Savvy savers will appreciate the Clearance area, as well as frequent-customer and volume-purchasing discounts.

dirtcheapdrives.com

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, and drive arrays, with detailed technical information about each product. This decade-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and accessories.

ecost.com

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full range of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, and applications. The site features both fastidious organization and personalized product recommendations.

emscomputing.com

EMS Computing offers a 40,000-product catalog, an easy-to-navigate site, and low shipping charges. A monthly newsletter delivers informative tips on choosing and using computer accessories.

www.freecolorprinters.com

It's not a scam—"qualified organizations" can indeed apply for free color printers at **FreeColorPrinters**, a subsidiary of Xerox. You'll need to commit to printing a certain number of pages per month and buy your supplies directly from Xerox. See the site for more details.

harddrive.com

Pack rat? **HardDrive.com** has your storage solution. Choosy shoppers will find extensive choices in IDE, SCSI, and IEEE 1394 (FireWire) drives, along with other peripherals. For fashion-forward computer users, the site offers an array of black PC components, from cases to scanners. After all, black *does* go with everything.

hypermicro.com

Hyper Microsystems specializes in storage. The catalog includes CD-ROM and CD-RW drives, tape backup drives, hard drives, and RAID adapters. Check the Hyper Bundles for ready-to-use RAID and CD-RW starter kits.

igo.com

iGo calls itself a "mobile technology outfitter." Use the site to outfit your cell phone, laptop, or PDA with chargers, batteries, and other necessary accessories. The iGo Alerts feature delivers free customized news to your portable device.

inkfarm.com

We're not sure what farm printer ink comes from, but we do know that **Inkfarm.com** sells ink and toner with flat-rate shipping. Choose "official" OEM ink or save money with aftermarket ink that often costs about half the price.

**insight.com**

With more than 110,000 items for sale, **Insight** offers an impressive catalog of hardware and software. Customized sites are available for shoppers in the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

jandr.com

Hardware, software, home-office products, and appliances abound at **J&R Computer World**, the New York City-based superstore famed for its selection and, ahem, "brusque" service. Avoid the attitude with this online version, which specializes



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Super Thin and Light

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- Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
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or as low as **\$45/mo** for 45 mos.¹²
No payments for 90 days for qualified customers.

E-VALUE Code: 00459-801114m

Recommended upgrades:

- 20GB¹ Ultra ATA Hard Drive, add \$99
- 256MB SDRAM, add \$149
- External 8X DVD-ROM Drive, add \$99



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- 20GB¹ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Modular 8X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- 16MB DDR ATI Mobility Radeon™ M6 4X AGP 3D Video
- Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology
- Internal 56K² Fax Modem
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\$1649

or as low as **\$49/mo** for 45 mos.¹²
No payments for 90 days for qualified customers.

E-VALUE Code: 00459-801117m

Recommended upgrades:

- 30GB¹ Ultra ATA Hard Drive, add \$99
- 8X Max CD-RW + DVD Combo Drive, add \$169
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty²; 3-Yr Next Business Day On-Site Service⁴; Lifetime 24x7 Phone Support, add \$219



Inspiron™ 2500 Notebook

Practical and Affordable Mobility

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- Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound
- 4-Cell Li-Ion Battery
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- 1-Yr Limited Warranty²; 1-Yr Mail-In Service, 1-Yr 24x7 Phone Support
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\$1049

or as low as **\$32/mo** for 45 mos.¹²
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E-VALUE Code: 00459-801109m

Recommended upgrades:

- Add a Targus Defcon Security Device, \$41
- Add a Notebook Protection Backpack, \$79
- Add a Notebook Surge Protector, \$30



Inspiron™ 8100 Notebook

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- 32MB DDR NVIDIA® GeForce2 Go™ 4X AGP 3D Video
- Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology
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**SITE
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in cameras, both digital and traditional film models. Product help is available via e-mail, online chat, and phone.

lanblvd.com

Wrestling with your old router? Network card not working? **LanBlvd.com** specializes in networking products. You'll find hubs, routers, interface cards, and wireless stations, along with other essentials for your LAN.

laptoptravel.com

Laptop Travel is road-warrior heaven! The site sells portable-computing and international-travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters/couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

megahaus.com

MegaHaus' catalog of "everything high-tech" offers a full spectrum of products, from mice to monitors. The site specializes in storage, including hard drives, RAID solutions, and CD recorders.

mei-microcenter.com

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett-Packard, and PowerSpec. You'll also find a decent selection of peripherals. Rummage through the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

All of the desktop and laptop memory sold at **Memory Man** carries a lifetime warranty, and the site's reference guide offers RAM-configuration info for all brand-name computers.

memory4less.com

Memory4Less.com offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, the site will help clue you in.

www.mobile-mania.com

Quickly head to **Mobilemania.com** for digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters. You'll find the bountiful selection a haven for folks (like you) who are always on the go.

mobileplanet.com

MobilePlanet is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys for mobile professionals. The selection includes notebooks, PDAs, wireless communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners.

mobilizenow.com

On the go? Gear up at **MobilizeNow**, where you'll find the gadgets you need, including GPS receivers, radar detectors, and cellular and PDA accessories. Tell the site what country you're headed for, and it will spit out a list of appropriate adapter plugs, phone adapters, and voltage converters.

monitorexpress.com

Monitor Express sells 500 models of new monitors, plus money-saving refurbished ones. The catalog also includes monitor cables, video adapters, and screen filters.

monitoroutlet.com

From inexpensive 14-inchers to elegant and pricey flat-panel LCDs, **Monitor Outlet** proffers a wide range of displays. The site sells units from 24 manufacturers, plus specialty monitors such as touch screens, wide-aspect-ratio units, and projectors.

motherboardexpress.com

Oh, mama. **Motherboard Express** was made for PC-building connoisseurs. Shoppers can filter the selection of 100-plus boards by manufacturer, chipset, processor type, case type, onboard controller, or number of CPUs.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from seven manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers will revel in handpicking the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com**. Order a motherboard and CPU together, and the company will configure and test them for you.

**IEEE 1394 (FireWire) Peripherals****www.allfirewire.com**

Need to know about the latest FireWire gadgets? **AllFireWire** presents hot-off-the-press product news. Click on a category, such as still cameras, hubs, or printers, for a list of compatible peripherals.

apdrives.com

One part FireWire and one part USB, **APDrives.com** offers direct sales of hard drives, CD-RW, DVD-ROM, and DVD-RAM drives, plus cables, cards, and hubs. Combo drives are compatible with both FireWire and USB.

atomicfirewire.com

Atomic FireWire sells a limited assortment of enclosures—FireWire drive cases that come with everything but a hard drive. Add your own IDE or ATA drive, and you'll have a speedy external drive in no time.

firewiredirect.com

FireWireDirect.com yields a small selection of storage peripherals, video cameras, and RAID solutions. Build your network from the ground up with the catalog of cables, adapters, hubs, and repeaters.

www.firewirestuff.com

Offering a great inventory but poor Web design, **FireWireStuff** stocks lots of goodies, including drives, peripherals, PCI cards, and PC Cards. You'll find plenty of tech specs on each product, but this site's confusing navigation leaves something to be desired.

www.firewire-1394.com

If you have visions of speedy new peripherals dancing in your head, visit **FireWire-1394.com**. The site's selection includes drives, Webcams, and video-capture cards, plus cables, hubs, and other connectivity essentials.

fwdepot.com

Catering to both Mac and PC users, **FireWire Depot** sells drives, cables, repeaters, and more. You can buy a driveless enclosure, then populate it with your own drive. A helpful guide explains how to build your own FireWire drive.

1394store.com

The **1394 Store** stocks networking, digital-video, and storage products that use IEEE 1394 (FireWire) connectivity. It also includes a selection of FireWire networking kits that let you connect your desktops and portables for speedy throughput.

eCOST.com

Gomez.com
Highest Reseller Rating
★★★



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XP Home Edition
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newegg.com

You won't have to shell out big bucks or scramble for hardware at **NewEgg.com**. Peck at the site's listings of new products and top sellers, then take a crack at the specials. Order carefully—the 15 percent restocking fee might make you squawk.

nxgen.com

Next Generation's Web site is densely packed with prebuilt computers and peripherals ranging from cables to graphics cards. The selection is huge, and the site provides full specs and plenty of details about each product.

1coolpc.com

A cool computer is a happy computer. **1CoolPC** specializes in fans, heat sinks, and other cooling

devices for your CPU, graphics card, monitor, hard drive, and other components that tend to swelter.

outpost.com

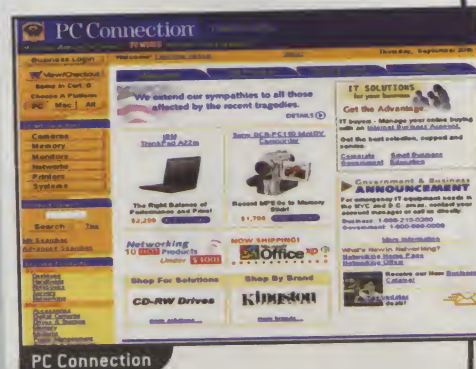
Outpost.com sells around 170,000 products—a full range of computer hardware, plus cameras, electronics, and innovative specialty products from partner companies.

palmgear.com

Users of handhelds will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial programs downloadable from **PalmGear.com**. You can buy PDA hardware and accessories, or sign up for an e-mailing list to receive information about new software, news, and user tips.

pcconnection.com

PC Connection offers bargains on a colossal variety of PC and Macintosh products. Smart Selectors ease the search process for those looking for turnkey systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.



www.pcliquidator.com

The getting's good at **PC Liquidator**, a site that offers clearance, refurbished, and overstocked hardware and software. The inventory is always changing and usually inexpensive. You can find many hardware choices for under \$10—and software for 99 cents.

pcmall.com

Shoppers at **PC Mall** receive free lifetime technical support on the site's vast selection of computers, hardware, and software. The site's business-solutions forum offers corporate leasing and volume pricing. Apple-heads can find all their favorite Macintosh products at the **Mac Mall** sister site (www.macmall.com).

pcnation.com

You'll pledge allegiance to **PCNation** after seeing its catalog of 70,000 hardware, software, and networking products. The home page offers links to "best buys" and to products with special rebates.

pczone.com

PC Zone stocks an impressive selection of all things PC. You'll find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Electronics Zone**. Printable rebate coupons can save you some cash.

www.pdaorder.com

PDAOrder sells personal digital assistants preloaded with the software you need. Bundles include programs for physicians, professionals, financial mavens, and college students. The site also offers reviews, feature articles, and how-to guides.

provantage.com

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers, including a large selection of books and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor prices and availability.

Consumer Electronics

bestbuy.com

Best Buy's site stocks a wide array of home audio and video components, portable audio gadgets, digital and traditional cameras, telephones, and home-office accoutrements. If time is of the essence, place an order online and pick it up at your local store.

consumer-direct.com

Shopping for something simple, such as a surge protector? Or complicated, like a C-Band satellite receiver? Either way, **Consumer Direct Warehouse** provides ample brands and styles to explore.

crutchfield.com

In business for 27 years, **Crutchfield** assembles an impressive assortment of audio and video products for your home and car. Inexpensive two- to three-day shipping is standard for most orders. The extensive Info Center offers guides to choosing components and installation tips.

800.com

800.com Electronics hosts a colossal selection of home audio and video components, digital cameras, personal audio devices, and telephones. Customer service includes live online help and community forums.

hifi.com

Hifi.com has home audio and home-theater products to please budget shoppers and discriminating audiophiles. Unique features and policies, including price matching and a 45-day satisfaction guarantee, set it apart from other Web consumer-electronics stores.

radioshack.com

"The Shack" stocks gadgets galore, including home-security and -automation devices, electronics kits, telephones, answering machines, and radio-controlled toys. Cool site features include a gift selector and a battery finder. If your new toy confuses you, **RadioShack.com** offers online manuals for thousands of products.

remotecentral.com

Choosing a universal remote control for your home-theater system can be daunting, but **Remote Central** can help. The site provides expert and hands-on user reviews, plus an interactive Clicker Picker to help you pick the remote control of your dreams.

Your grandmother had great stories.
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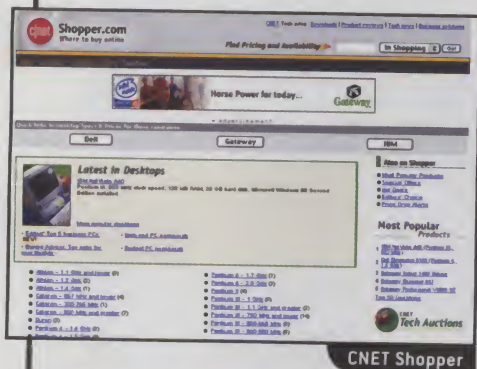
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www.sg3d.com

Sunway Graphics specializes in PC graphics cards, offering a wide selection of powerful 3D accelerators. You'll also see a smaller selection of other graphics products: TV-tuner cards, videoconferencing equipment, and video-capture cards.



shopper.cnet.com

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The price-drop-alerts feature will send you e-mail when the cost of a coveted gadget falls. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

sparco.com

Looking for that something extra? Check out **Sparco.com's** list of products that come bundled with "free stuff." The site stocks more than 130,000 products, and it offers a list of discounted items for students and faculty members of academic institutions.

ssdonline.com

At **State Street Direct**, shoppers will discover a huge selection of computers and imaging products. Digital-camera shoppers will find many items of interest, including customized comparison charts.



staples.com

Yeah, they've got that. **Staples' Web site** offers a liberal price-matching policy on computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized shopping lists. The company can occasionally take its time shipping items out to you, though, so beware.

superwarehouse.com

SuperWarehouse.com stocks printers, monitors, hard drives, scanners, digital cameras, and laptops. The site's selection of printers is particularly large, and even includes plotters, dot matrix units, and other special-use printers.

suppliesusa.com

Feed your PC's ravenous appetite for media, ink, and other consumables at **Suppliesusa.com**, a distributor of brand-name printer and computer supplies. The catalog includes data-storage supplies, printer accessories, papers, and film.

tccomputers.com

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards; buyers can choose to have motherboards and processors preassembled and tested without paying extra.

tcwo.com

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet offers only a small selection of computer products. You may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives, but the prices are fantastic.

techstore.com

TechStore.com offers hardware in dozens of categories and highlights monthly top sellers. The site also sells software, ranging from productivity suites to children's titles.

thenerds.net

With no misgivings about the tech-savvy of its company or customers, **TheNerds.net** offers 60,000 computer products, ranging from cables and connectors to graphics cards, at its fast and friendly site. The liberal 30-day return policy will protect you from getting stuck with the wrong product.

tigerdirect.com

TigerDirect's site offers 50,000 products, including computers from Compaq, Gateway, and IBM. Up for a little adventure? Order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit, and let the fun begin!

triocomputers.com

TrioComputers.com offers an impressive array of computer accessories and configure-your-own PCs. Read the site's 10-step tutorial on building your own PC to see if you're up to the challenge.

tristatecomputer.com

You'll have three times the fun at **Tri-State Camera and Computer**. The selection includes digital and analog cameras, computer peripherals, and home/office necessities, all with a money-back guarantee.

warehouse.com

The four "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware, Mac products, datacomm compo-

nents, and supplies. The site accepts corporate, educational, and government accounts, and offers business leases on several of its products.



**<Direct
PC Vendors**

adamant.com

Adamant Computers' desktop and notebook systems are backed by a three-year warranty and lifetime technical support. Systems are highly configurable, including your choice of AMD and Intel processors.

www.alienware.com

Alienware can build you a gamer's dream machine, high-performance workstation, or desktop video system. Cases are available in a rainbow of out-of-this-world colors.

buyabs.com

Exceptional customer support on custom-configured desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS Computer Technologies**. All systems include a 30-day money-back guarantee. Some units are available with Linux preinstalled.

buy-atlas.com

Atlas Micro offers desktop PCs built around Pentium, Celeron, and AMD processors. Buyers can use drop-down menus to create a custom configuration and are protected by a reasonable 30-day return policy.

compaq.com

Three arms of **Compaq Computer's** site offer computers for everyone. See the Compaq AtHome division (athome.compaq.com) for home and home-office systems, DirectPlus (www.directplus.compaq.com) for business PCs and servers, or the Compaq Factory Outlet Superstore (www.compaqfactoryoutlet.com) for big bargains.

cyberpowerinc.com

Each **CyberPower PC** includes a three-year warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee.

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— Account Executive and ProStar 2293 Owner

> The ProStar 2293

Custom configurations and a variety of features for the notebook you want at a price you can afford.



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Common Features

- > 512KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 4X ATI M6-P Mobile Radeon 3D Accelerator
- > External 32MB DDR SGRAM Video Memory
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound (SPDIF 5.1CH output for DVD)
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem and 10/100 Ethernet
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- > Snap-on color Palm Rest included
- > High Performance Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > 4 USB Ports, 1 IEEE 1394 Port & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Parts: 1P, Ext. Keyboard, and Ext. CRT
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.28" w x 10.74" d x 1.48" h

15" SXGA+ Active Matrix Display
Mobile Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.2GHz - M
Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
512MB 133MHz SDRAM
40.0GB Hard Drive⁴
CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive

\$2695

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Intel® Pentium® III Processor 1.0GHz - M
Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
256MB 133MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
30.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW/DVD Combo opt.)

\$1795

2293



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Share Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem + 10/100 Ethernet
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 3 Hot Keys for E-Mail, Browser and API
- > 2 USB Ports
- > Other Parts: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.1" w x 10.0" d x 1.48" h

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology
256MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
20.0GB Hard Drive⁴
8X¹ Max. DVD-ROM Drive (CD-RW opt.)

\$1245

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology
128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive⁴
24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$1095

5190



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > Integrated Ultra AGP Graphics (4x AGP Performance) with 64MB Max. User Definable Share Memory Architecture
- > 3.5" 1.44MB FDD
- > 3D Sound Effect
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > 10/100 Ethernet LAN Adapter
- > 56K Capable V.90 Modem
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 USB Port
- > Other Parts: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® XP home edition
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Super Slim Notebook: 11" w x 9.4" d x 1.5" h

12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology
256MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive⁴
24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$995

12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
Intel® Pentium® III Processor 500MHz
128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB
10.0GB Hard Drive⁴
24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.)

\$945

Options > Car Adapter > Port Replicator > Numeric Keypad > PCMCIA Cards (V90Data/Fax, Ethernet 10/100 16-Bit, MPEG-II) > Please call for options availability, most options are notebook specific. **GSA Contract # GS-35F-5084H**
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⁴Intel HD accessible capacity may vary depending on operating environment.
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PROSTAR

www.shopprostar.com 800.576.0546

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The site's service area includes downloadable drivers and lifetime tech support.

dell.com

Dell Computer's electronic storefront has always led the way in ease of use. The site is jam-packed with detailed information that makes it a snap to match a machine to your needs. Each system is configurable to the nth degree via drop-down menus, and you can get quick access to online support customized for your PC.

www.fujitsu-pc.com

Fujitsu's site focuses on portable computing, including notebook PCs and pen-based tablet computers. Each computer includes several warranty options. A trade-in program offers cash back on your old computer when you upgrade to certain models.

gateway.com

One of the biggest players in online computer sales, **Gateway** has an enormous and informative site that sells custom-built desktops and portables, delivering them on time 98 percent of the time, according to BizRate.com.

hpshopping.com

At this site, **Hewlett-Packard** sells its lines of desktop and notebook computers, handhelds, PDAs, digital cameras, scanners, and printers. The site makes repeat purchases simple for businesses and individuals.

ibm.com/products

ShopIBM sells business and home PCs, notebooks, servers, thin clients, networking equipment, and

peripherals. The build-to-order option allows buyers to customize a new desktop.

idot.com

From low-cost budget models to powerful monster machines, **iDot** offers customized desktop and notebook computers with a good return policy.

microexpress.net

Micro Express offers built-to-order desktop and notebook computers featuring AMD and Intel processors. Each system includes a 30-day guarantee and a two- or four-year warranty. Business leases are available.

micronpc.com

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **MicronPC** sells computers to home-office users, larger businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States. The Factory Outlet offers refurbished and discontinued systems.

nutrend.com

Custom-configure a home or business desktop PC at **NuTrend Computer Products**. The company stocks machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

Books and Music**amazon.com**

If **Amazon.com** were a retail store, no doubt it would dwarf the Mall of America. This easily navigated site has an unbeatable selection of books, CDs, and DVDs. You'll also find computers, electronics, toys, and practically anything else you could possibly want.

bn.com

With millions of titles in its inventory, **Barnes & Noble's** site is a book lover's dream. The site also sells e-books, music, DVDs, videos, posters, software, and magazines. Order more than two items, and shipping is free.

cdnow.com

Custom CDs are only one of the many gift options at **CDnow**. Shoppers will also find an enormous assortment of music, videos, and DVDs. An "electronics playground" showcases all manner of digital gadgets.

cheap-cds.com

Don't be turned off by the site's no-frills interface. (It looks like it was designed in 1994.) Most of the discs at **Cheap-CDs** cost less than \$12. You'll find a good selection, and you can preview tracks online.

codybooks.com

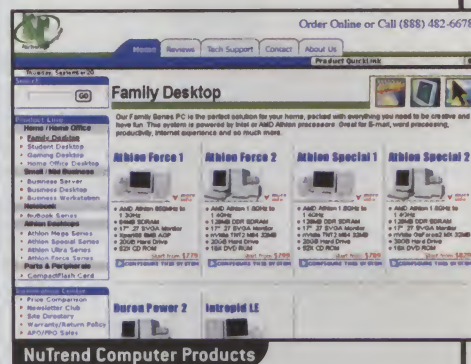
An independent bookstore based in Berkeley, Calif., **Cody's Books** offers an easily searchable catalog of 150,000 in-stock titles. The site provides thoughtful recommendations and reading lists.

secondspin.com

Bolster your music collection without emptying your wallet. **SecondSpin** is a used-music store that sells a wide, even eclectic, variety of music. You can sell your tired discs for cash or credit.

towerrecords.com

In addition to a massive catalog of CDs, **Tower Records** stocks media that some have already forgotten: vinyl and cassette tapes. If you prefer CDs, you'll find more than 3,000 discs for under \$10.

**www.polywell.com/onlinestore**

Polywell Computers may not be a household name, but the company offers desktops, notebooks, workstations, and servers that are worth a look. You'll find massive custom-configuration options.

sagernotebook.com

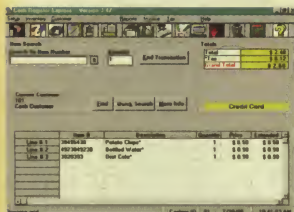
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SITE
REVIEWS**shoptoshiba.com**

The Web home for **Toshiba's** stylish portables and desktop systems doesn't offer as many build-to-order options as some other sites, but it's loaded with plenty of extended-warranty and lease options.

sonystyle.com/vaio

SonyStyle is a sleek-looking site selling Sony's line of VAIO desktops and notebooks, plus digital cameras, displays, and storage devices.

store.apple.com

Apple Computer's well-designed site allows you to custom-configure any Macintosh computer and offers a wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories. Beware the one-click ordering feature, however—using it may be a bit too convenient for impulse buyers!

unitedmicro.com

Take home a preconfigured Intel- or AMD-based PC, or start with a bare-bones system and let **United Micro** install the components of your choice.

www.winbook.com

Focusing exclusively on portables, **WinBook Computer** offers machines with a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support. Ironically, some of the site's best deals, the daily "Web specials," can only be ordered by phone.

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Resources**consumerreview.com**

ConsumerReview.com helps consumers research products before they buy. The site provides more than 200,000 reviews and ratings for tech gadgets and products for the home, car, and kids.

dcresource.com

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers can glean necessary info from the FAQ page, buyer's guide, message boards, and reviews.

dealnews.com

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gomez.com

Gómez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel vendors to online brokers. Check the ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.

hardwareincarnation.com

Let your laptop live again! **Hardware Incarnation** is a guide to repairing and upgrading laptop computers. The site includes a database of LCD screens—find out which laptops' displays are compatible. You'll also find upgrade tips and a guide to laptop repair.

www.linhardware.com

Will that sleek new laptop run Linux? Find out with the **ZDNet Linux Hardware Database**, where users share their experiences regarding which hardware's compatible with Linux—and which isn't. For the stuff that is, download the appropriate driver and put it to work. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

motherboards.org

Motherboards.org is packed with motherboard news, reviews, specifications, and tips. Its comprehensive database of 1,400 products includes driver information, technical details, and overclocking hints.

www.nexgear.com

If you've got a need to know when it comes to gadgets, visit **NexGear**. This site offers news and notes about PDAs, mobile phones, PCs, video games, and other techno-goodies.

nextag.com

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

pchell.com

When computer glitches are driving you over the edge, visit **PC Hell**. The site will soothe your jangled nerves with virus-detection tips, help for avoiding upgrade traps, and instructions for removing annoying "spyware."

pdastreet.com

No matter which PDA you use, there's something for you at **PDastreet.com**. This multifaceted site delivers reviews, software downloads, user tips, and classified ads for Windows CE, Palm, Visor, Psion, and RIM users.

resellerratings.com

Want a second opinion before you share your credit-card number with an unfamiliar online merchant? Check **ResellerRatings.com**, which provides customer evaluations of 2,000 online hardware vendors. Take reviews with a grain of salt: We've seen dozens of negative messages posted by one (very unhappy) person.

usbworkshop.com

USB Workshop is a friend to anyone in the market for USB components. You'll find specifications, user ratings, and photos for hundreds of peripherals, cables, and sundry USB contraptions. Explore the

lists of most-popular and most-talked-about products, then zoom in on peripherals compatible with your favorite operating system.

<Software
Sites**buypcsoft.com**

Buypcsoft.com offers software for Windows PCs in categories from business management to voice recognition. It's an efficient site with a good selection and high ratings among previous and current customers.

chumbo.com

Chumbo.com's selection of PC and Mac software includes games, business software, kids' programs, and operating systems. You'll also find software for your TV—that is, a good selection of DVD movies.

compuexpert.com

If you crave games for your Mac or PC, stop by **Compuexpert.com**. The categories include racing simulations, sports games, strategy games, and adventure titles. Colorful descriptions and screen-shots are given for most titles.

**cws.internet.com**

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for Internet software, including Web-development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews. A free newsletter provides summaries of new software releases.

download.cnet.com

CNET Download.com will help you find shareware and free software, linking to thousands of PC, Mac, Linux, and PDA titles. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews help you to locate the perfect program. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

dragon.ca

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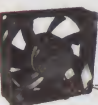
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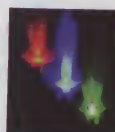
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the PC and video-game consoles. Although the games are in Canada, prices are available in both U.S. and Canadian dollars, and shipping is reasonable.

ebgames.com

EBgames.com is a game-player's paradise, selling new and preowned titles for PCs and every game console under the sun. The site's new EB1 service lets users with broadband Internet access rent PC games online.

handango.com

Handango offers thousands of commercial software downloads for Palm OS, Pocket PC, Windows CE, and RIM handhelds. Newbies can start with the site's tutorials and recommendations for first-time buyers.

jumbo.com

Jumbo is a fitting name for this monstrous file archive, featuring programs for sale, demos, shareware, and freeware. Jumbo Guides offer articles on backing up, sharing MP3s, and other computing topics.

999central.com

The price is right at **999central.com**, which stocks 100 software and DVD titles, each for \$5—shipping included. Educational, entertainment, and lifestyle applications are the most common.



Toys

amazon.com/toys

Amazon.com's toy selection is vast and diverse in part because the company has bought or partnered with many toy stores, including Imaginarium.com, Toys R Us, and Back To Basics Toys.

areyougame.com

Jump three spaces to **AreYouGame.com**, which claims to offer the Net's largest collection of games and puzzles. Indeed, the site serves up a vast range of diversions for all ages. Browse popular favorites, including Monopoly, Colorforms, and Mr. Potato Head. But it's not all kid stuff: Adults will find mysteries, tricky jigsaw puzzles, and spicy romantic games.

eurotoyshop.com

You can discover plenty of unusual gifts at **EuroToyShop**, a U.S. company that specializes in European toys. This virtual toy box includes dolls and dollhouses, building toys, Brio trains, and pull toys.

fao.com

FAO Schwarz's illustrious house of toys includes a long roster of popular characters from Curious George to SpongeBob SquarePants, as well as a wide selection of collectible and playtime Barbie dolls. The site also includes several specialty boutiques, a baby boutique, and a bargain bazaar.

hearthsong.com

HearthSong offers a distinctive array of timeless toys, art and craft supplies, games, and puzzles. The site specializes in educational classics, without a single Disney or Pokémon character in the catalog.

kbkids.com

KB Toys, one of the nation's largest toy retailers, has one of the best sites for toy shopping, **KBkids.com**. In addition to Lego, Barbie, and other brands, the site tempts the tots with video games, software, and collectibles. Browse the site by age group, price, or toy category.

smarterkids.com

Promising "great toys for young minds," **SmarterKids'** toy selection is for children ages 12 and under. Shop by brand, such as Sesame Street or Playskool, by character, or by theme. Specialty Centers showcase toys for gifted kids and those with special needs.

softwareoutlet.com

Calling all cheapskates! Come check it out. **SoftwareOutlet.com's** a veritable virtual bargain bin. You'll find dirt-cheap apps—older versions, titles from defunct companies, or just plain funky stuff.

www.tucows.com

It's not just bovine bliss: **Tucows** is also an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. Plenty of local mirror sites keep the download process speedy. The category list and reviews make finding the software you seek a breeze.



wiredlounge.com

Here's a site hard-core gamers will want to plug in to. **WiredLounge.com** serves up oodles of recently released games. The site is packed with refreshingly honest reviews, plus plenty of screenshots to leave you wanting more.

zdnnet.com/downloads

You'll need more bandwidth. Download shareware, freeware, and demos from **ZDNet Downloads**. The site offers daily software highlights and quick links to the week's most popular software. Every program is rated, reviewed, and checked for viruses, so your new software won't come with any unpleasant surprises. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, Computer Shopper's parent company.) ▼



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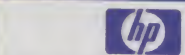
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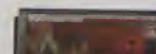
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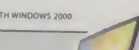
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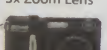


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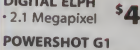
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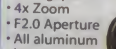
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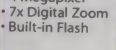
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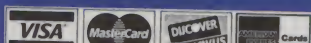
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12GB	24GB	120MB/min HP DDS-3 C1554AI	\$695
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24 auto sensing 10/100BASE-TX, RJ-45 ports	(3C16406)	\$819
12 Twisted Pair RJ-45 ports	(3C1640A)	\$135
24 Ethernet ports & 1 FE port	(3C16450)	\$885
12 auto sensing 10/100 Ethernet, RJ-45 ports	(3C16592A)	\$289
24 auto sensing 10/100 Ethernet ports	(3C16611)	\$865
500 100BTX RJ45 Dist. Ext.	(3C16683)	\$285
500 100BFX SC4 Dist. Ext.	(3C16684)	\$492
500 MGMT MOD SNMP	(3C16685)	\$672

• SWITCHES By 3Com OfficeConnect & SuperStack II •

12 auto sensing 10/100 BASE-TX, FE ports	(3C16464C)	\$389
10/100 Dual Speed Switch 5 Plus	(3C16790-US)	\$89
Dual Speed 8-Port Switch	(3C16791-US)	\$128
24 10BASE-T UTP, 2 10/100 TX ports	(3C16950)	\$919
12 10BASE-T UTP E & 2 10/100BASE-TX FE ports	(3C16951)	\$629
24 10/100BASE-TX FE ports, exp slot	(3C16980)	\$1049

• ETHERNET NIC Cards By 3Com •

10 ISA TPO Network	(3C509B-TPO)	\$59
10 ISA Combo Network	(3C509B-CMB)	\$119
10/100 PCI Network	(3C905B-TXNM)	\$59
10 Fiber Network	(3C900B-FLST)	\$159
100 PCI Fiber Network	(3C905B-FXSC)	\$245
10 PCI TPO Network	(3C900B-TPO)	\$59
10 PCI Combo Network	(3C900B-COMBO)	\$125
10/100 PCI Combo Network	(3C905B-COMBO)	\$135
10/100 PCI Network	(3C980C-TXM)	\$95

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Problems - Call Us!

ULTRA ATA HARD DRIVES

Capacity	Buffer	Speed	Part Number	Int.
Seagate				
20.0GB	2MB	7200	ST320011A	\$90
40.0GB	2MB	7200	ST340016A	\$112
60.0GB	2MB	7200	ST360021A	\$159
80.0GB	2MB	7200	ST380021A	\$215
IBM				
20.0GB	2MB	7200	07N6652	\$89
40.0GB	2MB	7200	07N6654	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	7200	07N6655	\$169
75.0GB	2MB	7200	07N4777	\$255
Maxtor (Formerly QUANTUM Drives)				
20.5GB	2MB	7200	QMP20500AS	\$89
30.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP30000AS	\$105
40.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP40000AS	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP60000AS	\$159
Maxtor				
20.0GB	2MB	5400	4K020H1	\$79
20.0GB	2MB	7200	MST020H2	\$89
30.0GB	2MB	7200	MST030H3	\$105
40.0GB	2MB	5400	4K040H2	\$93
40.0GB	2MB	7200	MST040H4	\$119
60.0GB	2MB	5400	4K060H3	\$139
60.5GB	2MB	7200	MST060H6	\$165
80.0GB	2MB	5400	4K080H4	\$195
100.0GB	2MB	5400	4W100H6	\$245
Western Digital				
20.0GB	2MB	5400	WD200AB	\$78
20.0GB	2MB	7200	WD200BB	\$85
30.0GB	2MB	5400	WD300AB	\$89
30.0GB	2MB	7200	WD300BB	\$99
40.0GB	2MB	5400	WD400AB	\$102
40.0GB	2MB	7200	WD400BB	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	5400	WD600AB	\$132
60.0GB	2MB	7200	WD600BB	\$165
80.0GB	2MB	7200	WD800BB	\$205
100.0GB	2MB	7200	WD1000BB	\$265

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4x4x6 CD Rewritable for PC or Mac	(CDW5EUSB)	\$165
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SuperDisk Drive 120MB & Floppy	(USBSL20)	\$145
1394 USB/PCI BOARD	(70HTL00110)	\$115
Floppy Drive	(USBFLOPPY)	\$85
USB 3.5" Hard Drives w/ Case (5400 RPM)		
20 GB USB20GB	\$175 /	30 GB USB30GB \$190
40 GB USB40GB	\$210 /	60 GB USB60GB \$249
80 GB USB80GB	\$309 /	100 GB USB100GB \$349

1394/FIREWIRE PRODUCTS

1394 PCI/MAC BOARD KIT	(70HTL13943)	\$55
1394 PCMCIA CardBus	(70HTL00040)	\$85
1394 ENET/PCI BOARD	(70HTL00090)	\$87
1394 Hub	(70HTL00030)	\$85
1394 Repeater:	(70HTL00020)	\$45
1394 15 Ft. Cable: 6pin to 4pin	(70CAB13943)	\$15
1394 15 Ft. Cable: 6pin to 6pin	(70CAB13942)	\$19
1394 3.5 Hard Drives w/Case (7200 RPM)		
20 GB FW20GB72	\$205 /	30 GB FW30GB72 \$225
40 GB FW40GB72	\$255 /	60 GB FW60GB72 \$295
80 GB FW80GB72	\$339 /	100 GB FW100GB72 \$429
1394 3.5 Hard Drives w/Case (5400 RPM)		
20.0 GB FW20GB54	\$195 /	30.0 GB FW30GB54 \$205
40.0 GB FW40GB54	\$235 /	60.0 GB FW60GB54 \$279
80.0 GB FW80GB54	\$329 /	100.0 GB FW100GB54 \$409

ZIP & JAZZ DRIVES / MEDIA

IOmega 100MB ZIP		
Int. IDE [ZIP100A] / 5 Pack [ZIP100A-5]		\$59 / \$279
Parallel Ext. [PPZIP100]		\$95
Ext. USB [ZIP100USB]		\$79
Zip media [ZIP100C] 2-9 / 10+		\$12 / \$10
IOmega 250MB ZIP		
Int. IDE [ZIP250A]		\$109
Ext. for PC Parallel Port [PPZIP250]		\$139
Ext. USB for PC or Mac [ZIP250USB]		\$139
Ext. SCSI for PC or Mac [ZIP250]		\$139
Zip media [ZIP250C] 2-9 / 10+		\$13 / \$11
IOmega 2GB JAZZ		
Internal SCSI [JAZZ2I]		\$245
External SCSI [JAZZ2X]		\$309
Jaz 1 GB media [JAZZ1GIGPC] 2-5/5-9/10+		\$807/775
Jaz 2 GB media [JAZZ2GIGPC] 2-5/5-9/10+		\$858/777

ULTRA/160 SCSI HARD DRIVES

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Capacity	Buffer	Speed	Part Number	Int.	Ext.
9.2GB	4MB	10,000	ST392051W	\$170	\$299
18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318437LW	\$170	\$299
18.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST318406LW	\$225	\$355
18.4GB	8MB	15,000	ST318452LW	\$329	\$459
36.7GB	2MB	7200	ST336737LW	\$309	\$439
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	ST336706LW	\$425	\$555
36.7GB	8MB	15,000	ST336752LW	\$559	\$689
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST373405LW	\$769	\$899
181.6GB	16MB	7200	ST1181677LWV	\$1449	\$1579

Maxtor

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QUANTUM Drives

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Capacity	Buffer	Speed	Part Number	Int.	Ext.
9.2GB	4MB	7200	XC309100LW	\$149	\$279
18.4GB	4MB	7200	XC318400LW	\$175	\$305
18.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW018L2	\$205	\$335
36.7GB	4MB	7200	XC336700LW	\$320	\$450
36.7GB	8MB	10,000	KW036L4	\$399	\$529
73.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW073L8	\$769	\$899

IBM

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Ultra 160 SCSI

Capacity	Buffer	Speed	Part Number	Int.	Ext.
9.1GB	4MB	10,000	07N6360	\$219	\$349
18.3GB	4MB	10,000	07N6350	\$279	\$409
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	07N6340	\$465	\$595
73.4GB	4mb	10,000	07N6300	\$839	\$969

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	PLATINUM	BLACK
Includes 1 frame, and 1 cartridge		
IDE 66 with plastic cartridge (DP2200A66)	\$79	N/A
IDE 66 with metal cartridge (DP2200A66)	\$87	\$96
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DP2200UW)	\$105	N/A

EXTRA CARTRIDGE

Plastic IDE 66 (DPACART66)	\$42	N/A
Metal IDE 66 (DPACART66)	\$50	\$60
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUCART)	\$61	N/A

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IDE 66 (DPFRAME66)	\$44
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUFRAMEA)	\$51

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MicroVIDEO DV200 FireWire Editing Kit	(210100094)	\$259
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Total Cap	# Drives	Each Drive/ Speed	Item No.	Price
45GB	5	9GB/7200rpm	ARR45-7EX	\$2189
72GB	4	18GB/10,000rpm	ARR72-10EX	\$1949
90GB	5	18GB/7200rpm	ARR90-7EX	\$2679
144GB	4	36GB/10,000rpm	ARR144-10EX	\$2989
216GB	6	36GB/7200rpm	ARR216-7EX6	\$3979
252GB	7	36GB/10,000rpm	ARR252-10EX	\$5219

• SCSI RAID-READY Drive Enclosures w/DataPorts •

# DataPorts	Interface	Item No.	Price
2	Ultra2 SCSI	FHCASEUSW	\$549
4	UltraWide SCSI	DUALCASEUSW	\$659
8	Ultra2 SCSI	QUADCASEU2	\$1179

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Brand	Model	Max Spin	Speed	Internal	External
Teac	CD532S	32X	85ms	\$72	\$132
NEC	CDR3010	40X	85ms	\$67	\$127
Plextor	PX40TS(tray)	40X	85ms	\$87	\$147

• WIDE SCSI CD ROM Drives •

Plextor	PX40TSUW	40X	85ms	\$99	\$189
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• Atapi CD ROM Drives (IDE) •

Brand	Model	Max Spin	Speed	Internal	External
Teac	CD540E	40X	85ms	\$43	\$98
Mitsumi	CRMCFX48X	48X	65ms	\$39	\$95
Creative	SBCD52	52X	100ms	\$37	\$95
Sony	CDU5211	52X	85ms	\$39	\$95
Acer	CD656A	56X	85ms	\$39	\$95

• CD ROM Towers •

Above drives configured in multiple drive towers. For fast access to multiple CD's at one time. Perfect for schools, networks, and more.

We have towers from 2 drives to 14 drives and up to 52X. Call us for custom configurations - including CD Rewriters!

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Auto-switches between 10BaseT or 100BaseT Ethernet connection. Hooks directly to your network. Designed for mixed LAN environment - can be used simultaneously from Win 95, NT, Win for Workgroups, OS/2, HTTP, Mac, and UNIX. Pre-assembled.

40x drive speed, 8 drive tower. (MIT40X8N)	\$1369
48x drive speed, 8 drive tower. (MIT48X8N)	\$1399

• IDE CD Rewriters (Int. / incl. software, 1R & 1RW disk) •

Teac 16x10x40 IDE (CDWS16EKIT)	\$129
Acer 16x10x40 IDE (CRW1610A)	\$129
Sony 24x10x40 IDE (CRX175A/A1)	\$179
Hewlett Packard 24x10x40 IDE (Q2097A)	\$255
Plextor 16x10x40 IDE (PXW1610TAR)	\$185
Yamaha 20x10x40 IDE (CRW2200EZ)	\$189
TDK 24x10x40 IDE (A1-241040)	\$159
Plextor 24x10x40 IDE (PXW2410TAR)	\$209

• SCSI CD Rewriters •

Plextor 12x10x32 SCSI Int/Ext Bare (PXW1210TSB/X)	\$219/ \$279
Yamaha 20x10x40 SCSI Int/Ext Bare (YCRW2200S/X)	\$235/ \$295

• USB and 1394 CD Rewriters •

Hewlett Packard 4x4x6 USB (C4540A)	\$155
Teac 4x4x6 USB (CDWS4EUSB)	\$165
Plextor 8x8x24 USB (PXS88TU/SW)	\$265
Sony 12x8x32 1394 (PXW1610TAR)	\$219
FireWire 16x10x40 (w/ Plextor Drive) (FW16X10X40P)	\$295
Yamaha 20x10x40 1394 (CRW2200FXZ)	\$309
TDK 16x10x24 1394 (FE-161040BX)	\$285

• CD RECORDABLE MEDIA •

CDR-74 in jewel case

16x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$4/\$15/\$35/\$66
16x	Standard 5/20/50/100 pack	\$6/\$24/\$56/\$105
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Printable CDR-74 in jewel case

16x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$4/\$15/\$35/\$66
16x	Standard 5/20/50/100 pack	\$7/\$26/\$62/\$115

CDR-80 80 minute media

24x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$4/\$13/\$32/\$59
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• CD REWRITABLE MEDIA •

CDR-74W in jewel case

4x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$6/\$24/\$56/\$104
4x	Standard 5/20/50/100 pack	\$9/\$35/\$79/\$159
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Pioneer	IDE (slot)	40X/80ms	16X, 110ms	DVD106	\$69
Pioneer	SCSI	40X/90ms	10X, 120ms	DVD305	\$99

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TOSHIBA Precision and Excellence

Baro	Interface	CD Speed	DVD Speed	Part #	Price
Toshiba	IDE	48X/95ms	16X/115ms	SDM1612	\$65
Toshiba	SCSI	40X/85ms	10X/105ms	SDM1401	\$115

Complete DVD Kits

MegaHaus 16X Drive Kit (DVD16KIT)	\$125
Creative Encore 12X DVD Drive Kit (CLDVD12KIT)	\$135
Hollywood MPEG-2 Decoder (HOLLYWOOD)	\$55
Waveless wireless transmitter allows you to transmit DVD movies from computer to TV (PCTOTV) \$85 or \$80 w/DVD drive.	

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LTO Viper Ultra2 SCSI Bare External Tape Drive (STU62001LWS) \$5095

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A22M-R1U	Pentium® III 850	14.1 TFT	64/20/DVD/56k	1699.99
A22M-S1U	Pentium® III 900	15 TFT	64/20/DVD/56k	1799.99
A22M-T1U	Pentium® III 1000	14.1 TFT	128/30/DVD/56k	1799.99
A22P-U1U	Pentium® III 1000	15 TFT	128/30/CD-RW/56k	CALL

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Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
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T23-4CU	Pentium® III 900	14.1 TFT	128/20/DVD/56k	1999.99
T23-6CU	Pentium® III 1000	14.1 SXGA	128/30/DVD/56k	2299.99
T23-8CU	Pentium® III 1113	14.1 SXGA	128/48/DVD/56k	CALL

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Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
I200-42U	Celeron® 600	12.1 TFT	64/10/24X/56k	899.99
I200-51U	Celeron® 600	12.1 TFT	64/10/DVD/56k	1099.99
I200-62U	Pentium® III 700	13.3 TFT	64/10/DVD/56k	1299.99
I200-7WU	Celeron® 700	13.3 TFT	64/10/24X/56k	1099.99
I200-8WU	Pentium® III 750	13.3 TFT	64/20/CD-RW/56k	1349.99
I200-9WU	Pentium® III 750	13.3 TFT	64/20/CD-RW/56k	1449.99

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24X CD-Rom, 56k Modem,
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Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
X21-61U	Pentium® III 700	12.1 TFT	128/20/CD-RW/56k	2099.99
X21-62U	Pentium® III 700	12.1 TFT	128/20/CD-RW/56k	2199.99
X21-63U	Pentium® III 700	12.1 TFT	128/20/CD-RW/56k	2299.99

TRAVELMATE

Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
520TX	Pentium® III 850	14.1 TFT	128/20/DVD/56k	1299.99
614TXC	Pentium® III 1000	14.1 TFT	128/30/DVD-RW/56k	2199.99
741LV	Pentium® III 1000	15 TFT	128/30/DVD/56k	2099.99

TRAVELMATE 212T

Celeron® 800 Mhz Processor
12.1" Active Color Display,
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128 Mb Ram/20 Gb HD,
Ext. FDD-DVD Combo Drive
56k Modem, 10/100 Ethernet

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VAIO SERIES

Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
FX340	Pentium® III 900	14.1 TFT	128/15/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1549.99
FX370	Pentium® III 1000	15 TFT	256/20/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1899.99
FX390	Pentium® III 1000	15 SXGA	256/30/DVD/CD-RW/56k	2099.99

PCG-FX390P

Pentium® III 1GHz Processor
15" SXGA Color Display
256Mb Ram/30Gb HD,
DVD/CD-RW
10/100 Ethernet, 56k Modem,
Windows XP Pro

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WINDOWS XP Pro & 2000 MODELS

Model	Processor	Display	Ram/HD/CD/Mod	Price
FX310P	Celeron® 900	14.1 TFT	128/15/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1449.99
FX310K	Celeron® 900	14.1 TFT	128/15/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1449.99
FX340P	Pentium® III 900	14.1 TFT	128/15/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1649.99
FX340K	Pentium® III 900	14.1 TFT	128/15/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1649.99
FX370P	Pentium® III 1000	15 TFT	256/20/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1999.99
FX370K	Pentium® III 1000	15 TFT	256/20/DVD/CD-RW/56k	1999.99
FX390K	Pentium® III 1000	15 SXGA	256/30/DVD/CD-RW/56k	2199.99

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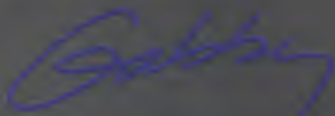
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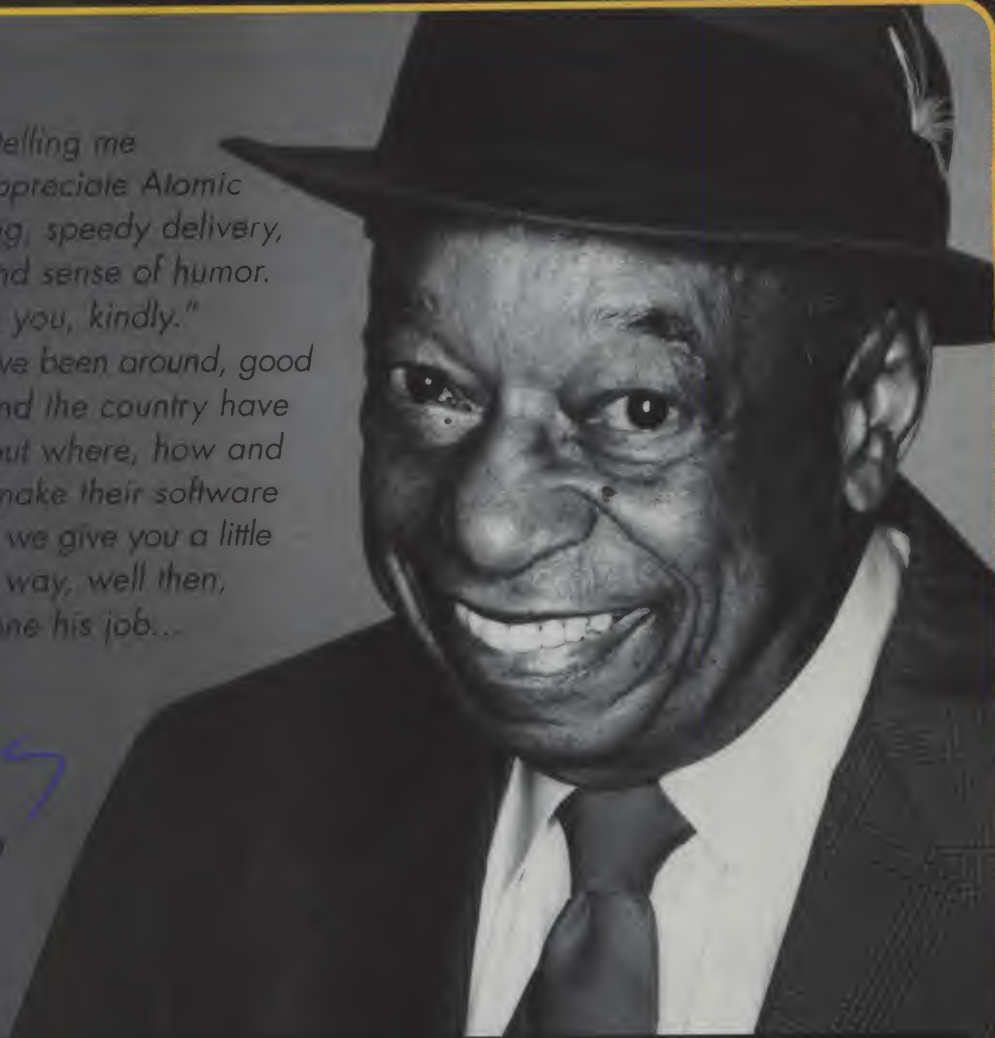
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Three PC vendors are pairing diminutive desktops with the new 845 chipset for the Pentium 4 processor, which enables the Pentium 4 to use inexpensive SDRAM.

Dell's new OptiPlex GX240 series of 1.5GHz and 1.7GHz Pentium 4s comes in three new, smaller form factors.

From large to small, the three new form factors are Small Minitower (SMT), Small Desktop (SD), and Small Form (SF), with the SF available in a sealed-chassis design. LegacySelect software lets IT managers enable and



Dell OptiPlex GX240

disable certain ports, thereby controlling users' ability to connect devices via serial or parallel ports. The base price is \$799 without monitor, \$939 with a 15-inch monitor and a CD-ROM drive.

The desktops come with 64MB of PC133 SDRAM (expandable to 1GB) and a choice of three AGP graphics cards, including the 32MB ATI Radeon

VE with Appian Hydravision, which supports multiple monitor usage and DVI for digital flat panels. The S3 sleep mode is designed to reduce power consumption and increase productivity, and the power factor correcting

(PFC) power supplies use power more efficiently.

Hewlett-Packard has expanded its Professional line to include two new systems that employ Intel's 845 chipset, the e-PC 40 and the Vectra VL420. The \$579 e-PC 40, which HP

says will be available with the 845 chipset by December, is the smallest and offers what the company claims is the lowest total cost of ownership. It features a sealed-box design and low noise emissions. The \$899 Vectra VL420 is available in three packages: a desktop, a mini-tower, and the new ultrasmall form factor.

MicronPC has also launched a business system featuring the 845 chipset. Its ClientPro CR comes with a 1.5GHz Pentium 4, 128MB of PC133 SDRAM expandable to 3GB, and a 20GB hard drive. It's available in a minitower, a midtower, or the new low-profile uATX case. Pricing starts at \$999.

—Nancy A. Lang (with additional research by Brian Bennett)

Trash Data on Stolen Laptops

Businesses have a new line of defense against notebook theft. A new product from startup Solagent (www.solagent.com) enables you to remotely encrypt, retrieve, and destroy data from a Windows-based computer after it's been lost or stolen.

Solagent Enterprise lets you install the Solagent Secure software on multiple computers and monitor them from the company's Web site. You can choose to protect all data, including the information on your LAN, or just individual files. And you can quickly determine if confidential information has been accessed on the remote computer after a security breach. Its reporting and asset-tracking capabilities let you monitor the security options and state of each computer in the network.

Once you sign up, Solagent e-mails the software and installation instructions to your

users. But you can choose to be the only person authorized to remotely administer and protect the systems.

The service downloads a small program onto a laptop. The program's filename is unique to each system and doesn't appear in standard file listings. To report a laptop stolen, you log on to the Solagent site. When and if the thief logs on to the Internet, the agent invisibly checks in to the Solagent server. If it discovers the laptop's been reported stolen, it performs the actions you specified when you set up the account. This could include encrypting files of any predefined type, uploading them to Solagent's servers, or deleting them. You can then download and decrypt the files from Solagent's servers to another PC.

The downside is the service works only if the thief logs on to the Internet.

—N.A.L.

Hit Me With Your Best Stats

Small companies can now monitor site performance and activity the way the big guys do, without paying big bucks.

Pure-play ASP WebSideStory, which sells an enterprise version of the service to companies such as Disney, Cisco, and Hewlett-Packard, has introduced HitBox Professional (www.hitboxprofessional.com). Pricing for the service, designed for small to medium-size businesses, starts at \$23.95 per month.

"It's completely Web based—all you do is log on to check statistics," says senior vice president Michael Christian. "With shrink-wrap software, you have to crunch huge log files, and you're not getting real-time data."

HitBox Professional lets you measure the effectiveness of e-mail campaigns and banner ads, see which keywords were used in search engines to find your site, determine peak usage times, and see the paths visitors take to move through your site. "This helps you see how they get to the purchase or lead-generation point and where they're falling out of the process," says Christian.

—N.A.L.

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SONY DAV-S500 DVD/Home Theater System

DVD/CD/SACD/receiver six speaker system, 280 watts total system power (3 ohms, 120 - 10 kHz, 10% THD), 2-Way

Front speakers with 2-3/8" woofers, Center and Surround speakers with 2-3/8" full-range drivers,



Subwoofer with 7" driver

Dolby Digital, dts and Dolby Pro Logic decoding
Digital Cinema Sound system recreates the acoustics of Hollywood dubbing stages, Headphone Theater mode, space-saving full digital amplifier

SONY MHC-RG70AV Mini Hi-Fi Component System

Features 3-disc CD changer with Play Exchange, Dolby Pro Logic decoding, Dual auto reverse deck w/ full logic controls, Hybrid Dual Woofer main speakers, 240 watts of total system power, Five-speaker system with Center and



Surround, Game Sync front A/V inputs for videogame console or VHS. Subwoofer output, Remote Commander remote control

GARMIN ETREX VISTA

GPS Handheld

The eTrex Vista combines a basemap of North and South America, with a barometric altimeter and electronic compass. The compass provides bearing information while you're standing still and the altimeter determines your precise altitude.



SONY D-EJ925

Portable CD Player

Tiny, tough, and loaded with sophisticated CD playback electronics / Great for travel, workouts, or any listening situation



If he were still living, actor/hoofer James

Cagney would be the no-brainer choice as spokesperson for the Sony D-EJ925 CD portable

SONY MZ-R900DPC MD WALKMAN

Mini Disc Player/Recorder PC Bundle

Includes Digital PCLink for Recording Your Favorite Music Files from the Internet, Automatic Synchronized Recording, Automatic Trackmark Insertion, MD-LP (Long Time Stereo Recording and Playback), "AA" Type NC-14WM Rechargeable Battery Included, World's Longest Recording



Time with up to 66 hours playback and 30 hours of recording time

Nikon COOLPIX 885

3.21 million effective pixels to produce ultrahigh-definition 2,048 x 1,536-pixel images
Compact and lightweight, with a style that looks as good as the pictures it takes, the COOLPIX 885 is always ready for that important moment. The ergonomic, easy-to-grip body fits snugly in the hand, with easy access to all controls. The COOLPIX 885's TRANSFER button enables one-touch upload to the web* via the USB cable, automatically transferring all selected pictures in the COOLPIX 885 straight to the web or directly to your computer.



MINOLTA DIMAGE 7

5.2 Megapixels Digital Camera and 2/3 inch CCD
The DIMAGE 7 has a high power 7x optical zoom lens that has the flexibility to shoot wide-angle land-



scapes to intimate portraits using the telephoto setting. The DIMAGE 7's zoom range is equivalent to a 28mm to 200mm lens in 35mm format Super High Image Quality, 5.2 Megapixels, 2/3 inch CCD, Optical 7x Zoom Lens with 28mm Wide Angle Coverage (equivalent to 28 - 200mm in the 35mm film format), Digital Hyper EVF.

Add Snazz to Your Site

BY DAVID ENGLISH

These cool online tools let you incorporate some frills into your Web pages.

WANT TO SPRUCE UP YOUR SITE WITHOUT BREAKING YOUR BUDGET? If you know where to look, you can uncover a wide range of online site-building tools that let you create a fully functioning Web site complete with such extras as HTML-compatible graphics and three-dimensional text. Like their shrink-wrapped cousins, online offerings run the gamut from specialized graphics utilities to comprehensive programming environments. But unlike shrink-wrap, many online tools are free, and others offer trial versions.

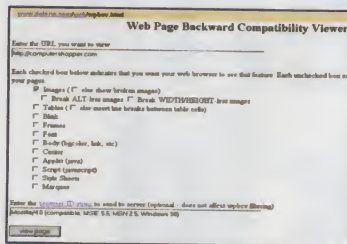
MediaBuilder provides some of the simplest Web-based site-building tools. These free utilities include GIFWorks (www.gifworks.com) and 3D Text Maker (www.3dtextmaker.com). GIFWorks looks just like a Windows program, with pull-down menus that operate like those in a standard graphics utility. The online GIF editor lets you resize, colorize, and add special effects to any GIF file, including animated ones. You can grab an online image for editing by entering its URL or choose a GIF from your hard drive.

With 3D Text Maker, you select a typeface and color, specify the dimensions, adjust the animation settings (including the number of frames, speed of rotation, and direction of rotation), and enter your text. The result is an animated GIF with spinning 3D text.

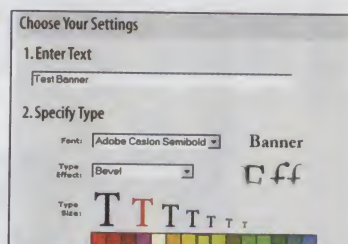
You can easily design your own site banners with Adobe Systems' free Online Services (www.adobe.com/services). It takes only a few seconds to adjust the settings, view the results, and right-click the image to save it to your hard drive. The same site lets you create Web-compatible graphics, adjust their size, and optimize them for the Internet.

PARLEZ VOUS WEB?

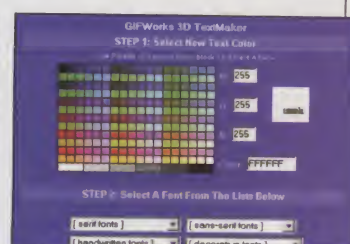
Cool pictures may attract visitors to your site, but what if they can't read English? AltaVista's free Babel Fish utility (babel.altavista.com/tr) can translate entire Web



Delorie's Backward Compatibility Viewer shows you how your page will look without various HTML components.



It takes only a few seconds to design your own banners using Adobe Systems' free Online Services.



The GIFWorks online GIF image editor lets you resize, colorize, and add special effects to GIF files.

pages in seconds. Just feed it your URL, and it spits back your page with the text transformed into Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, or Spanish. One significant limitation, though: Babel Fish can't translate Web pages larger than 5K. If the page is bigger, it will translate only the first 5K. And don't be surprised if the translation is littered with words in the original language; Babel Fish's translations aren't always complete.

If you're wondering how your site looks to the rest of the world, try Delorie's free Web Page Backward Compatibility Viewer (www.delorie.com/web/wpbcv.html). It shows you how your pages appear without the support of features such as images, Java applets, frames, JavaScripts, tables, style sheets, marquees, and other HTML components.

PULL IN FOR A TUNE-UP

As your site grows in size and complexity, it can become sluggish. For a quick tune-up,

visit Netscape Netcenter's free Web Site Garage (websitegarage.netscape.com). The site checks for browser compatibility, load times, misspelled words, dead links, link popularity, HTML integrity, and compatibility with top search engines and directories. You can even schedule automatic tune-ups and have the results sent to you via e-mail. NetMechanic (www.netmechanic.com) features two Web-based utilities for maintaining and monitoring your site. HTML Toolbox identifies problems such as HTML-code errors, broken links, misspelled words, and slow-loading pages. Annual fees start at \$50 for sites with fewer than 101 pages (or 101 frames). For \$14.99 a month, Server Check Pro monitors your server responses every 15 minutes to advise you when and for how long your server is down. Both services offer a free trial run.

Sometimes a site needs not just mere

tinkering but a massive overhaul. For a partial or total redesign, try Balthaser: Fx (www.balthaser.com). With it, you can create Flash-based pages or an entire site with the latest animations, graphics, backgrounds, music, and sound effects by dragging and dropping elements onto a browser window. You can even upload your own media elements and integrate them into the design. Fees vary from \$49 to \$199, depending on the size of the project. That may seem steep until you check out the site's library of rich media. Sign up for a free 30-day trial, and you'll have enough storage space to create 10 new sites. You don't pay until you're ready to show your new site to the rest of the world.

Tools such as these aren't for everyone. At their worst, they have limited capabilities and are poorly supported. But at their best, they're frequently updated and easily accessible from any computer. The best strategy is to try them to see if they meet your needs. ▼



Giving in a Material World

BY RICH CASTAGNA

**The Web offers
opportunities for your
company to contribute to
good causes—and some of
them won't cost you a penny.**

Ninety-nine

percent of running a business is about *getting*: getting the supplies you need to create your products or services, getting new cus-

tomers, getting paid, getting ahead of the competition. But sometimes *giving* should fit into the picture, too. Investing a bit of profit in worthy causes will help establish your company as an active and responsible member of the community.

Improving your stature in the community may not pay the rent, but your customers may take notice and reward your company's social awareness with increased business. Of course, the tangible benefit is a tax write-off that can put a little more bounce in your bottom line.

Becoming a Good Samaritan is easy; plenty of organizations are in need of a helping hand. But if you're in an area with few charity alternatives, or you just don't have time to do research, you'll find lots of help online. Sites such as Charity.com

(www.charity.com) offer information about charities and nonprofits, along with lists and descriptions of hundreds of charitable organizations. Another useful site is Give.org (www.give.org). Formed by the merger of the Council of Better Business Bureaus' Foundation and the National Charities Information Bureau, Give.org catalogs information on hundreds of not-for-profits that either solicit donations nationally, or have national or international organizations. The site doesn't make recommendations but provides data on the not-for-profits' programs, finances, and fund-raising efforts.

GIVING FREELY

The Web offers another way to do your part for charity. When you buy your office supplies or services from Working Assets

(www.workingassets.com) or its affiliate Web site, WorkingForChange (www.workingforchange.com), a portion of what you spend goes to nonprofits.

When you access any of more than 100 online stores through the WorkingForChange Web site, the organization donates 5 percent of your purchase price to nonprofit groups such as Rainforest Action Network, Doctors Without Borders U.S.A., and the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Buy office supplies from OfficeMax.com, for

instance, and 5 percent of everything you spend goes to such progressive causes. Expedia, another WorkingForChange participant, donates \$2 for every ticket you buy. For these companies' good intentions to kick in, you have to access their sites from WorkingForChange.

Many business service providers have aligned with Working Assets to donate a portion of their sales to charity. Get a MasterCard or a Visa card through Working Assets, and the companies will give 10 cents

to nonprofit groups every time you use either card. Or sign up for telephone service, including toll-free numbers and calling cards, at Working Assets, and it will donate 1 percent of your charges. Other communication products include mobile-phone services and Internet access from EarthLink, which donates 1 percent of your \$19.95 monthly fee.

Before you sign up for any Working Assets services, you can check the list of nonprofits that benefit from the donations to make sure they're the kinds of organizations you want to help.

Another similar organization is iGive.com (www.igive.com). It doesn't offer credit cards or phone services, but you can shop at its online mall, where scores of stores donate up to a whopping 26 percent of an item's purchase price to charities. Donations typically run more on the order of 1 percent to 6 percent, however. FranklinCovey, for instance, donates 6 percent of the tab; At Your Office, 4.8 percent; OfficeFurniture.com, 2 percent; and OfficeMax.com, 1.6 percent.

MONEY FOR NOTHING

You can even donate without digging into your pockets. All you have to do is point your browser to these sites and click away.

When you click on a sponsor at PovertyFighters (www.povertyfighters.com), it donates 25 cents to charity, no purchase necessary. QuickDonations (www.quickdonations.com) is a similar site with commercial and philanthropic sponsors that pay as you click. If your business has a Web presence—either a com-

merce or an information site—you can sponsor one of these sites and garner some relatively low-cost advertising.

The economy may be anemic, or your business may be slogging through a slow season, but you don't have to sit on the sidelines when it comes to helping others. If you can't write a check, you can still feel good when you order a load of office supplies from one of these sites. ▼

Your Trash, Their Treasure

Donate those old PCs to those in need.

Your company just upgraded those ancient Pentium IIs, and you're ready to haul that worthless pile of silicon to the nearest landfill.

Worthless to you, but to thousands of schools, nonprofit organizations, and people with disabilities, those PCs are far from obsolete. Do a little digging, and you'll find a wealth of nonprofit groups and Web sites eager to take them off your hands.

In operation since 1984, the National Cristina Foundation (NCF) (www.cristina.org) accepts donations of computers, peripherals, software, and related technologies, which it then redirects to educational and training organizations. NCF offers detailed information on tax breaks corporations can get by donating old equipment. Check out the site's FAQs.

Share the Technology (www.sharetechnology.org), a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization, maintains a database of more than 2,400 schools, groups, and individuals from Arizona to Zambia seeking PCs and Macs. You can donate your hardware to Share the Technology or search its database for suitable recipients.

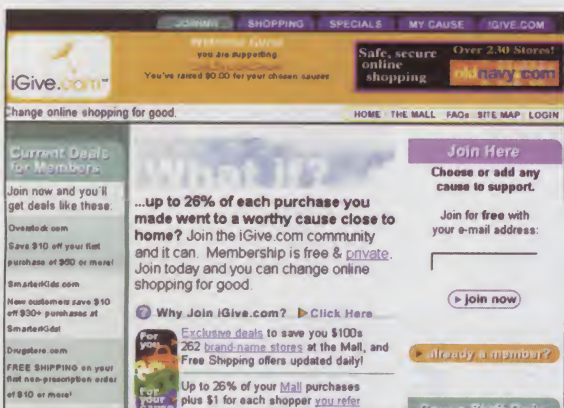
A few words of caution before you pass on PCs. First, don't forget to remove all corporate and personal files from the hard drive. And make sure the charity you choose has certified nonprofit status, or else your donation won't be tax-deductible.

You can also donate software, but Share the Technology emphasizes that if you do so, you must donate all the original disks, documentation, and license agreements as well. You can't have used the original software to buy a new version for an upgrade price, and you must destroy all backup copies of the program.

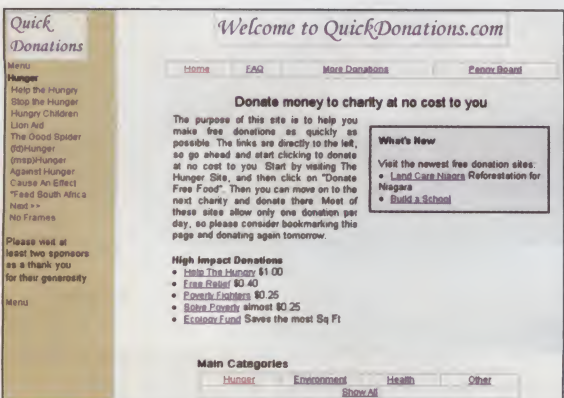
—Donna Tapellini



At Working Assets' Shop for Change site, you can buy office supplies and other products, and the companies will donate a portion of your purchase price to charity.



Use iGive.com to shop from leading office-supply stores, and some of your money will go to nonprofit organizations.



No purchase necessary: Just click as directed at the QuickDonations site, and a charity will benefit.

a server that suits you

Every business has different needs. Here's how to select a server that best meets yours.

BY ALAN ZEICHICK

The least visible part of your com-

pany's computer network is likely the most vital. It's your server, a high-powered PC that runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides shared resources or services for employees or customers. Nobody sits in front of a server's screen and keyboard, unless the server is being installed, maintained, or reconfigured. In fact, some servers, called appliances, don't even have monitors or keyboards.

Servers typically provide shared drive space for collaborative projects and data backups, and for managing network printers. They can run specialized communication applications, such as e-mail or groupware software, to keep company employees in touch with one another and the outside world. Increasingly, businesses use servers to host Web sites for internal access by employees, for controlled access by partners and suppliers, and for access by customers and the general public via the Internet.

Because a server is a critical piece of

equipment used for a variety of purposes, replacing an old server or buying a new one can be tricky. Hardware options differ from those of a PC or a notebook, and pricing can range from \$1,000 to well over \$100,000 for a high-end enterprise server designed with very fast and highly redundant hardware that will almost never crash. Here, we'll look at the most common server hardware features, with an eye toward finding those models best-suited to smaller businesses.

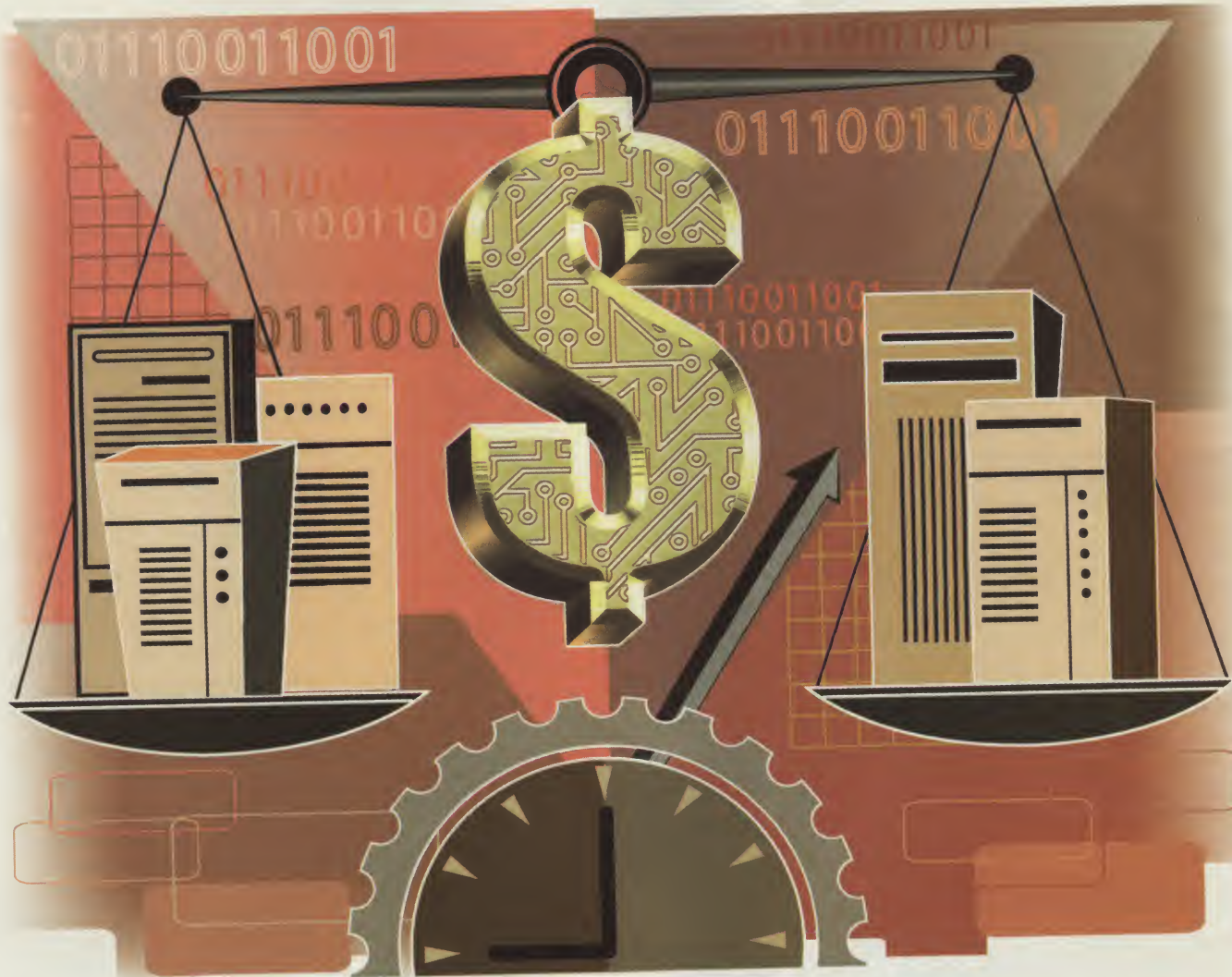
The type of server you'll need—and its cost—depends on what you'll be using it for. If your goal is to set up an e-mail server or a file/print server to share drive space and printers within a workgroup, ample memory and drive space are more important than sheer speed. A relatively inexpensive (under \$4,000) single-processor system with a few big hard drives should suffice. But if you're setting up a transaction-based computing system—such as an accounting system, a database server to store lots of corporate information, or a high-volume Web server—performance is key. You'll probably need

two to four microprocessors, ample memory, and high-speed drives, so your cost will range from about \$15,000 to \$30,000.

GENERAL-PURPOSE OR APPLIANCE?

Before you start looking at hardware, you have to decide whether you need a general-purpose server running an off-the-shelf operating system (such as Microsoft Windows 2000 Server, Novell NetWare, or a Linux or Unix operating system) or a special-purpose server, called a server appliance, with dedicated hardware and software preconfigured for specific tasks.

The former gives you the most flexibility, but would be relatively expensive, and requires the most time and expertise to set up and administer. The latter—examples of which are Snap Appliance file servers and Cobalt Networks Web/e-mail servers—are less expensive, and easy to set up and manage, which is particularly important if you don't have an IT department or at least a PC guru interested in learning about servers. On the downside, appliances have limited



flexibility when it comes to performing new tasks, or upgrading hardware for more capacity and performance.

It's not an all-or-nothing decision, though. Many businesses find it best to use both general-purpose servers and server appliances, employing Windows or Linux servers to run their Web sites or other transaction systems, and file-server appliances to provide hundreds of gigabytes of cheap, easy-to-configure shared drive space.

Another key decision is the physical shape of the server. If you need only a few servers, get some that look like standard PCs, so you can put them on top of a table, sit them on the floor, or stack them inside a closet. These so-called tower servers are the easiest to work with. If you anticipate buying more than four or five servers, consider those specially designed for installing inside a standard 19-inch-wide equipment rack. Rack-mounted servers are tidier and simpler to wire, but if you decide not to install them in a rack, they can be hard to handle. Plus, you need to figure in the cost of the rack, typically between \$2,000 and \$3,000. Most

small businesses start with tower servers and move to rack servers as their data centers grow.

CHECK THE SPECS

Selecting the right specifications for a general-purpose server will be your next challenge. You have many choices, but we'll focus on the three that make the biggest difference: processors, memory, and storage. As for the other features, unless you have specific needs, stick to the "less is more" philosophy. For instance, most servers don't need more than one network interface or more than one power supply. You can save a lot of money, without limiting performance, by skipping features you don't need.

The most expensive option will be the number and speed of the processors. Whatever its function, a processor speed of 800MHz to 1GHz is sufficient. For a file, print, or e-mail server, a single processor in this speed range will be more than adequate. For a Web server, or one that serves up dynamic Web pages, a dual-processor

server in this range strikes a fine balance between price and performance. With a database server, a groupware server running Lotus Notes or Microsoft Exchange, or one handling other transaction software, you'll need at least two processors, maybe four. Consult the software maker for a recommendation and don't scrimp on those specs. If you short-change the hardware, the software won't perform as expected. You can buy a dual-processor-ready server with only one processor installed, but it's more cost-effective to buy it equipped with both processors right off the bat.

Selecting server storage is more complex. First, you have to choose between a SCSI or ATA drive interface. Then you have to determine the number and capacity of hard drives in your server.

SCSI drives are the traditional choice, in part because they used to be the only ones that could be set up in multidrive arrays. They're still faster than ATA drives but significantly more expensive. ATA drives, the same ones you have in your desktop or notebook PC, can now be set up in arrays as well. They

come in larger capacities than their SCSI equivalents, but they're slightly slower.

Servers intended for handling business-related apps, file sharing, printing, and other throughput-agnostic tasks can generally take advantage of ATA's cost-effectiveness. Streaming-media servers or those used to share video, large graphics, or heavily accessed databases, however, require SCSI's speed.

For a file or print server shared by a small workgroup (with fewer than 30 people using it regularly, for instance), get a server with two drives, and get the largest-capacity drives possible. Today, that's likely to be about 36GB or 72GB each, depending on the server manufacturer. For all other purposes, go for a server with at least three or four drive bays.

When you buy a server with SCSI hard drives, you'll likely have the option of choosing Redundant Array of Inexpensive (or Independent) Disk (RAID) drives. RAID lets you pool three or more drives into a single virtual hard drive. RAID is available in different levels, each with a different combination of performance and fault tolerance. The best is RAID 5, which spares all your data in the event of a hard drive failure. The downside of RAID 5 is it diminishes the amount of

of money to go beyond 1GB of RAM—you just won't use the extra memory.

NETWORKABLE

Gateway, which focuses on the small-business market, also sells its servers

THE LEADING PLAYERS

The biggest fish in the server pond are Compaq, Hewlett-Packard (at press time, these two companies were in merger talks), Dell, Gateway, and IBM, each with an array of offerings for both small to medium-size businesses and huge enterprises, with dozens of options for processors, memory, storage, and more. We've selected just a few of their models and configurations as examples.

Compaq's ProLiant family of servers comes in both tower and rack configurations. The \$4,477 DL360, which squeezes two 1GHz processors, 512MB of RAM, and an 18GB SCSI hard drive into 1.75 inches of rack space, makes a great Web server. When configured with 512MB of RAM and six 36GB SCSI hard drives (\$12,423), the dual 1GHz ML570 tower can act as a high-speed file server for hundreds of employees, a host for many high-volume Web sites, or a server for data-intensive transaction systems such as databases or accounting software.

Dell's servers tend to be less expensive, but because you can buy them only direct,

direct. The \$4,486 Gateway 7400 tower, configured with one 933MHz processor, 512MB of RAM, and two 18GB SCSI hard drives, is ideal for e-mail, Web serving, and workgroup file-sharing. The 7-inch-high rack-mount Gateway 8450r is perfect for high-end database processing and back-end accounting applications. Configured with four 700MHz processors, 1GB of RAM, and five 36GB SCSI hard drives, it costs \$14,851.

Hewlett-Packard sells well-designed but expensive systems. You can buy some models direct from the company, but for most configurations, you need to go to a dealer. For a workgroup file/print server or a small Web server, consider the NetServer e800 tower, with one 866MHz processor, 256MB of RAM, and one 9.1GB hard drive, for \$1,515. The \$9,169 rack-mounted NetServer LH3000, with dual 866MHz processors, 512MB of RAM, and four 36GB SCSI hard drives, would be a good business-application, file/print, or Web server.

IBM's xSeries 200 tower server, with one 1GHz processor, 256MB of RAM, and a 60GB ATA hard drive for \$1,312, is a great value for a small-business file/printer server or e-mail host. Thinking bigger? At the other end of the scale, the \$28,982 rack-mountable xSeries 250 with four 700MHz processors, 1GB of RAM, and 10 73MB SCSI hard drives is ideal for back-end database processing, driving high-volume Web sites, or any other type of business application.

Meet Your Match

If your goal is:	Look for these specs	And check out these systems
Small department file/print, low-volume e-mail	One processor; one 18GB or 36GB drive; 256MB RAM	Compaq DL320, ML330; Dell PowerEdge 350, 300SC, 500SC; Gateway 6400; IBM xSeries 200, 300
Large department file/print, low-volume Web, small databases, groupware, medium-volume e-mail	Two processors; two 36GB drives; 512MB RAM	Compaq DL360, DL380, ML350; Dell PowerEdge 1400SC, 1550, 2500, 2550, 4400; Gateway 7400, 7450r; HP NetServer e800, LC2000, LH1000, LH3000; IBM xSeries 200, 300, 220, 230, 240, 330, 340
High-volume Web server, larger database, accounting, business transactions	Four processors; four 36GB drives; 1GB RAM	Compaq DL580; Dell PowerEdge 6400, 6450; Gateway 8400, 8400r; HP NetServer LH6000; IBM xSeries 250, 350

space available for data storage. Whichever level you choose, you'll need a RAID controller to implement RAID in hardware, and this adds considerably to the cost of your server. Because today's hard drives are so reliable, unless your server is truly mission-critical (meaning it will seriously hurt your business if you have to shut it down for maintenance), skip the RAID controller.

The final critical option is memory. Here, *it's hard* to go wrong because you can always add more later. The minimum amount of memory should be 256MB, which is good for file/print applications. For all other purposes, choose 512MB or 1GB for a single-processor server and at least 1GB for a dual-processor server, unless your application software's manufacturer recommends some other amount. Unless your software specifically requires more, though, it's generally a waste

you'll need more expertise in buying and setting them up. This makes them generally best if you have experienced IT staff. The company's smaller servers, such as the minitower PowerEdge 1400SC (which for \$999 offers a single 933MHz processor, 128MB of RAM, and one 10GB ATA hard drive), are ideal for setting up an intranet, acting as a print server, or handling e-mail. The \$8,066 tower-shaped PowerEdge 4400 has the same specifications and applications as Compaq's ML570 at a much lower price. It also has two additional drive bays for future expansion. Dell's popular rack-mount server, the PowerEdge 2550, places two 1.26GHz processors in 3.5 inches of space, along with five 36GB SCSI hard drives, for \$7,549. This system can handle file serving, Web service, and even running collaborative applications such as Lotus Notes or Microsoft Exchange with ease.

FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE

The server that's right for your business depends on what you'll be using it for. Whatever you choose, leave some room for expansion, but don't opt for extras you don't need. An empty drive bay, an extra memory socket, and at least one PCI slot will be useful in case you need expansion options later, but in most cases, you don't need features like built-in gigabit Ethernet or hot-swappable, high-redundancy power supplies. Finally, if you don't have a lot of technical expertise, investigate vendors' onsite support programs. They won't help you with software problems, but if the server's hardware goes down, they'll help get you up and running as soon as possible. ▼

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Recommended upgrades:

- APC Pro8T2 Surge Protector, add \$39
- Lexmark Z53 Printer, add \$129

Dimension™ 4300 Desktop

NEW Advanced Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.6GHz
- 128MB SDRAM
- 20GB* (7200 RPM) Ultra ATA HD
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- 32MB NVIDIA® GeForce2 MX Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- Integrated Audio with SoundBlaster® Pro/16
- MS® Windows® XP Home, MS® Works Suite 2001
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty²; 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service³

\$699 Business Loan: **\$19/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code:
10224-591106c

Recommended upgrades:

- Intel® Pro 100+ PCI NIC, add \$40
- MS® Windows® XP Professional, add \$99

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- 128MB PC133 Non-ECC SDRAM
- 20GB* EIDE HD
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- 16MB ATI® Rage™ 128 Ultra 4X AGP Graphics Card
- 48X Max CD-ROM; Integrated AC97 Audio
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 NIC
- MS® Windows® XP Professional
- OptiFrame™ Small Desktop Tool-less Chassis
- 3-Yr NBD On-Site Service³

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10224-391109

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¹Service may be provided by third party. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. To receive Next Business Day service, Dell must notify service provider before 5 pm (depending on service contract) customer's time. Availability varies. ²For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes; accessible capacity varies with operating environment. ³Download speeds limited to 53Kbps. Upload speeds are less (about 30Kbps) and vary by modem, manufacturer and line conditions. Analog phone line and compatible server required. ⁴Monthly payment based on 48-MONTH 12.49% INTEREST RATE FOR QUALIFIED BUSINESS CUSTOMERS. OFFER VARIES BY CREDITWORTHINESS OF CUSTOMER AS DETERMINED BY LENDER. Taxes, fees and shipping charges extra and vary. Business Loan from CIT Online Bank to small business customers with approved credit. ⁵CompleteCare service excludes theft, loss and damage due to fire or intentional damage. CompleteCare is currently not available in all states. For complete details, visit www.dell.com/us/en/bsd/service/service_complete-care_svc.htm. ⁶Up to 11MB of system memory may be allocated to support DVM1 Graphics. ⁷Service may be provided by a third-party provider under contract with Dell. Technician will be dispatched if necessary following phone-based troubleshooting. For 5x10

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Corporate IT Buying Behavior and Customer Satisfaction Study
– 2nd Quarter 2001

Dell | Small Business Notebooks

Inspiron™ 2500 Notebook

Practical and Affordable Notebook

- Intel® Celeron® Processor at 800MHz
- 12.1" SVGA TFT Display
- 64MB shared™ PC100 SDRAM
- 10GB* Ultra ATA HD
- Fixed Internal 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
- Intel® Integrated 3D* AGP Video
- Internal Mini-PCI 56K Capable* Modem
- MS® Windows® Me, MS® Works Suite
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr Mail-In Service, 1-Yr Phone Tech Support

\$899 Business Loan: **\$24/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-891108**

Recommended upgrades:

- 3-Yr Mail-In Service with Lifetime Phone Tech Support, add \$99
- APC® Notebook Surge Protector, add \$30

Inspiron™ 8100 Notebook

Pinnacle of Performance Notebook

- NEW Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1.2GHz-M
- 15" Ultra XGA+TFT Display
- 128MB PC133 SDRAM
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- Fixed Internal 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
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- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery w/ExpressCharge™ Technology
- Internal Mini-PCI 56K Capable* Modem
- MS® Windows® XP Home, MS® Office XP Small Business
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr Mail-In Service, 1-Yr Phone Tech Support

\$2249 Business Loan: **\$60/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-891122**

Recommended upgrades:

- Fixed Internal CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive, add \$299
- MS® Windows® XP Professional, add \$79

Latitude™ C610 Notebook

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- MS® Windows® 2000 Professional
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM/Floppy Drive
- Internal 56K Capable* Modem and 10/100 NIC
- 3-Yr NBD On-Site Service³

\$1799 Business Loan: **\$48/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-79117a**

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\$629 Business Loan: **\$17/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-291106**

Recommended upgrades:

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1.0GHz, add \$200
- Same Day 4-Hour (5x10) On-Site Service[®], add \$349

PowerEdge™ 1400SC Server

Small Business Value Server

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 933MHz
- Dual Processor Capable
- 128MB 133MHz ECC SDRAM
- 18GB* (10K RPM) Ultra3 (Ultra 160) SCSI HD
- Embedded Intel® 10/100 NIC
- Embedded Ultra3 (Ultra 160) SCSI Controller
- 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service³; 1-Yr Parts; 7x24 Phone Tech Support

\$799 Business Loan: **\$21/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-291107**

Recommended upgrade:

- MS® Windows® 2000 Server, add \$799

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NEW Advanced Performance Workstation

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\$1099 Business Loan: **\$29/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: **10224-491110**

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E-VALUE Code: 10225-591106c

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Practical and Affordable Notebook

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- 64MB sharedTM PC100 SDRAM
- 10GB* Ultra ATA HD

\$899 Business Loan: **\$24/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
E-VALUE Code: 10225-891108

PowerEdge™ 2500SC Server

Affordable Scalability Server

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- 18GB* (10K RPM) Ultra3 (Ultra 160) SCSI HD

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E-VALUE Code: 10225-291114



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AMD 1.4GHz	A1400BOX266	\$139
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Intel 1.7GHz	BX80531NK170G	\$299
Intel 2GHz	BX80531NK200G	\$655

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PC2100 512MB	DDR 184pin DIMM	\$109
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18.4GB 10,000rpm	ST318405LW	4mb	\$222
36.7GB 7200rpm	ST336737LW	2mb	\$305
36.7GB 10,000rpm	ST336705LW	4mb	\$405
181.6GB 7200rpm	ST3181677LW	4mb	\$1418

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9.1GB 10,000rpm	07N3220	4mb	\$182
18.3GB 10,000rpm	07N3210	4mb	\$212
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CD-RW Drives

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12x10x32 IDE	Plextor PX-W1210TA/SW		\$150	\$190
16x10x40 IDE	Lite-On LITE1610		\$92	\$132
16x10x40 IDE	Pacific Digital U-30105		\$98	\$138
16x10x40 IDE	Acer 1610A		\$107	\$147
16x10x40 IDE	Teac CDW516E		\$138	\$178
16x10x40 IDE	Sony CRX1611/82U		\$140	\$180
16x10x40 IDE	Yamaha CDRW2100EDK		\$147	\$187
16x10x40 IDE	TDK VeloCD		\$152	N/A
16x10x40 IDE	Plextor PXW1610TA		\$192	\$232
20x10x40 IDE	Acer 2010A		\$128	\$168
20x10x40 IDE	Yamaha CRW2200EZ		\$195	\$235
24x10x40 IDE	Lite-On LITE2410		\$140	\$180
24x10x40 IDE	Pacific Digital U-30106		\$138	\$178
24x10x40 IDE	Sony CRX175A/A1		\$189	\$229
24x10x40 IDE	TDK VeloCD		\$152	N/A
24x10x40 IDE	Plextor PX-W2410TA/SW		\$219	\$259
12x10x32 SCSI	Plextor PXW1210TS/SW		\$244	\$284
16x10x40 SCSI	Yamaha CRW2100SZ		\$255	\$295
20x10x40 SCSI	Yamaha CRW2200SZ		\$286	\$326
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Pioneer IDE 16X DVD / 40X CD ROM	Slot DVD106	\$80	
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IBM

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60GB 7200rpm	07N6655	\$171

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40GB 5400rpm	ST340810A	\$102
40GB 7200rpm	ST340016A	\$114
60GB 5400rpm	ST360020A	\$138
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80GB 7200rpm	ST380021A	\$214

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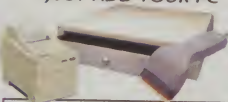
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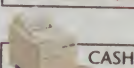
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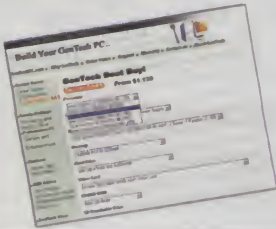
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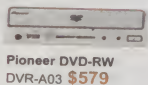
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ALICE & BILL

The Hard Edge

BY ALICE HILL
AND BILL O'BRIEN

*Moving beyond the tragedy; HP and Compaq (Oh My);
and No More AOL CDs.*

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL MONTHS WILL HAVE PASSED BY THE TIME YOU read this, the tragedies that occurred in New York City, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. are only a few days behind us in "Hard Edge" time. Even if you didn't know someone who died or was injured, you no doubt felt grief, sorrow, emptiness, and loss.

In the "old neighborhood," where Bill grew up, if someone did something bad to you, you did it back two or three times worse—first, so they'd understand you didn't appreciate

what they'd done, and second, so they'd think long and hard about ever doing it again. It's a harsh response, but all too often, you can quickly run out of cheeks if you don't use it.

For all we know right now, we may be at war, both against terrorism and against those nations that support it. We hope we aren't, but we've worked hard for our freedom and our way of life in America, and if that's what it takes to preserve it, it's what we must do.

In the meantime, the president has asked us to get back to business as usual, so as usual, "The Hard Edge" this month is filled with rants, raves, and techno-nit-picking.

SUN AND CISCO

In case you hadn't noticed, the economy was in a handbasket even before the tragedy, and it doesn't look as if it will clear itself up anytime soon. Why did the economy trash itself? Was it all because of failed dot-coms and unsuccessful new technology? Maybe. Your humble chroniclers of techno-chaos think they have things figured out, without necessarily pointing a finger at Alan Greenspan. (But feel free to do so if you want to.)

First there were dot-coms buying bandwidth, if not equipment, and bandwidth sellers buying equipment to supply the dot-

coms that didn't buy their own. Enter Cisco and Sun Microsystems, which sold all that bandwidth equipment. (All right, maybe not all of it, but enough to boost their respective stocks way up.) Then there were no dot-coms. (This is starting to sound like an old Donovan song.) All that equipment originally needed for all that bandwidth wasn't needed much at all any more.

Two things, other than doticide, happened at that point: The bandwidth suppliers didn't need any more equipment and, in fact, now had an excess sitting idle. The dot-coms' equipment, on the other hand, was moving rapidly—through the hands of auctioneers and into other places that needed it but could afford only discounted prices. The one thing that wasn't happening was new-equipment purchases. It was this glut of unused and used equipment that put

both Cisco and Sun in the tank. (We've said it before, and we'll repeat it now: These two companies should merge. C'mon, guys. Start thinking with your stockholders in mind.)

INTEL

No look at plummeting technology could sidestep Intel. If ever there was a company steeped in greed and stupidity, it's Intel. No

question, no doubt, no possibility of anything else. Alice and Bill have officially removed Intel from the list of Evil Empires and put it on the toilet-paper roll of hapless buffoons. Why? The Pentium 4 and RDRAM.

Not since IBM's MCA bus has anything been so ill-received as the union of the Pentium 4 and RDRAM. The offspring was overpriced PCs that couldn't justify their existence in the face not only of AMD's Athlon, but also Intel's own 1GHz Pentium III when equipped with DDR SDRAM. Still, Intel pushed and pushed Pentium 4/RDRAM systems as if they could save the earth and increase the intellectual capacity of the average eighth-grader. Greed.

Not only that, but in "Hard Edge" time, Intel is threatening to sue Via Technologies because Via wants to market a Pentium 4/DDR SDRAM-capable chipset now, when Intel's own version of such a chipset is still at least three months away. Getting the Via chipset to market would shave about \$350 off the price of every Pentium 4 computer just because DDR SDRAM is so much cheaper than RDRAM. It will also help Intel push Pentium 4s on the multitude while quietly retiring the Pentium III. Stupidity.

The upshot is that Pentium 4 sales are lagging well behind what they should be for new technology. When you can't sell leading technology, it's not a given that trailing-edge tech will take up the slack. It hasn't.

MICROSOFT

Speaking of dumb, it's possible Microsoft thinks the majority of the world is just a big old dumb grazing cow. That's Bill's conclusion after kicking Windows XP around for a while. It's not geared toward the dumb in the same way Microsoft's aborted Bob was. XP is more a dumb white-collar program for the coffee-table set who want to think they know something.

The trick to XP is whether all the built-in facilities (most of which were really terrible through release candidate two) can be replaced by third-party software. If they can, life will go on. If they can't, there will doubtlessly be another conference with the Justice Department in Microsoft's future.

(Private note to John Ashcroft from Bill: Dear John, It's not the bundling of facilities with Windows that's the problem with Microsoft's operating systems. There's only a problem when those facilities can't be replaced by third-party equivalents without



ALICE & BILL

risking crashing the OS. An operating system shouldn't be dependent upon ancillary utilities for its function. If you have a screen door installed on the front door of your house and later decide to remove it, parts of your entry door shouldn't come off with it.)

HP AND COMPAQ SITTING IN A TREE

Strangely enough, Alice has been sitting on the fence about whether the intended merger between HP and Compaq is a good thing. The negative noises are everywhere: Wall Street sent a clear and immediate message by slapping both stocks senseless, while Alice was reminded many times by Bill that 90 percent of all large mergers fail. (Just as Alice liked to remind Bill that 90 percent of all business startups fail, way back when he was briefly thinking of buying some Internet stock.)

HP and Compaq have also racked up their own previous merger disasters. When Compaq bought DEC in 1998, the integration was unbearably painful as the more nimble Compaq struggled with Digital's old-school pocket-protector culture. DEC was considered such a boat anchor that Texas rival Dell was able to gain the top spot in the bloody battle for PC market share, a seat Compaq never regained.

HP, meanwhile, struggled at one time with the costly Apollo merger, then abandoned the Apollo workstation technology faster than Compaq could say "DEC Alpha." But the fact remains, dicey mergers dot the corporate landscape, and even when they aren't immediately viewed as failures, most leave Alice wondering why the checkbook was opened in the first place.

For example, AOL bought Netscape when the message was abundantly clear that Microsoft's Internet Explorer had won the battle of the browser. IBM bought Lotus after Lotus failed to successfully move to the Windows operating system, essentially making Excel the default spreadsheet program in corporate America.

The list goes on and on. So why is Alice so unwilling to say, "Bah, these two companies must not merge?"

One reason is IBM. When IBM was the big blue giant, small PC guys like Michael Dell and Ted Waite schemed and plotted and dreamed of someday dethroning Big Blue. The goal made them crazy with determination, and in the process they changed the way PCs were sold and thought about.

Today, the PC market-share pie is a boring mish-mash of slices, with no evil demon to unseat, no monolith to tumble, and no

real reason to innovate. At the same time, low-end attempts to grow market share (Packard Bell early on, then eMachines) only eroded a crumbling market. Alice hopes a giant HP plus Compaq will galvanize the PC industry to new heights, as the new Goliath lurches and stumbles, and, more likely than not, exits the PC business for greener land in the business of servers and services.

On HP's behalf, Alice hopes it can finally create a viable and awe-inspiring server and services strategy, and that Compaq's low-hanging fruit (the iPaq handheld comes to mind) will be properly harvested, but it's just too soon to tell. And most of all, here's hoping

An operating system shouldn't be dependent upon ancillary utilities for its function.

ing a college student in an obscure dorm somewhere starts thinking about a better way to manufacture and sell PCs than big, old HP/Compaq, because it's more than time to ride the circle again. Don't you think?

FREE RADICALS BONDING

Far from a chemistry course, this is an excerpt from a ZDNet News story:

"The U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California indicted [Dmitry] Sklyarov and his employer, Moscow-based Elcom, of one count of conspiracy, two counts of trafficking in a program to circumvent copyright protections, and two counts of marketing a program designed to circumvent copyright protections. The charges stem from software Sklyarov created that strips copy protections from Adobe Systems' e-Book electronic publishing format."

Each charge carries a maximum penalty of \$500,000 and five years in prison. Sounds like justice, but Lawrence Lessig, director of Stanford University's Center for Internet and Society says, "Why lock this guy up for 25 years? That's 25 years! This has got to be a wake-up call about how distorted this system has become."

Well, at least he can count. Possibly, it's because we have this thing called the Digital Millennium Copyright Act that forbids the breaking of technological copy protections or the creation of software or devices that do so. Unless Sklyarov just enjoys carrying around break-in tools, the distortion of the event was a fund-raiser held to support the

guy. Worse still, Adobe has reportedly backed away from the case, and some are calling for the company to pay for Sklyarov's defense. This is lunacy.

A dependent segment of the population has arisen in the past decade or so. Its demand is that everything should be free. (Bill blames it on bad parenting.) Although we are dangerously close to becoming a socialist nation, we have not yet fallen on our swords and become communist. (Don't confuse the politics with the philosophy.)

To let this lunatic fringe get even the tiny foothold it's acquired is very dangerous. The rioters at the last WTO conference did \$3 million worth of damage to small businesses, the people on whose behalf they were supposedly there to protest. Rather than bore you with an eloquent explanation of the benefits of capitalism, here's a simple example: America and Russia. Who's sending money to whom? End of discussion.

NO MORE AOL CDS PLEASE

Alice never minded AOL CDs because she lives a life filled with unwanted software. "Hard Edge" old-timers will remember when Alice and some friends discovered if you dangled an AOL CD on a stick over a campfire, you could make interesting-looking modern art for free. At least that was something.

But those without campfires have decided to get serious, and Alice learned about a new organization (www.nomoreaolcdfs.com) that intends to gather a million AOL CDs and dump them in front of the company's headquarters. So check out its site and mail in your discs, but if AOL were smart, it would have set up this organization as a phony anti-PR stunt and made us look like even bigger idiots than the people in the AOL commercials.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Send your good wishes to Alice and Bill this holiday season by penning your own yuletide greeting—or just a rant about HP and Compaq if you're feeling Scrooge-ish. And get ready for the January 2002 Alice and Bill bonanza—resolutions, startling infographics, and more.

Yuletide Wishes, Alice and Bill

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The screenshot displays the ChannelOnline interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options like Product Overview, Specification, and Live Availability. The main area shows details for 'Brand X - Desktop - 1x850MHz - HD 80GB - RAM 512KB - L2 128KB'. It includes fields for Part Number, List Price, Customer Price, In stock, and Competitive Pricing. Below this is a 'Live Pricing & Availability' section with a table of supplier data. A small image of a desktop computer is also visible.

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b This grid also lets you quickly determine which SKUs are available at each of your suppliers' warehouse locations.

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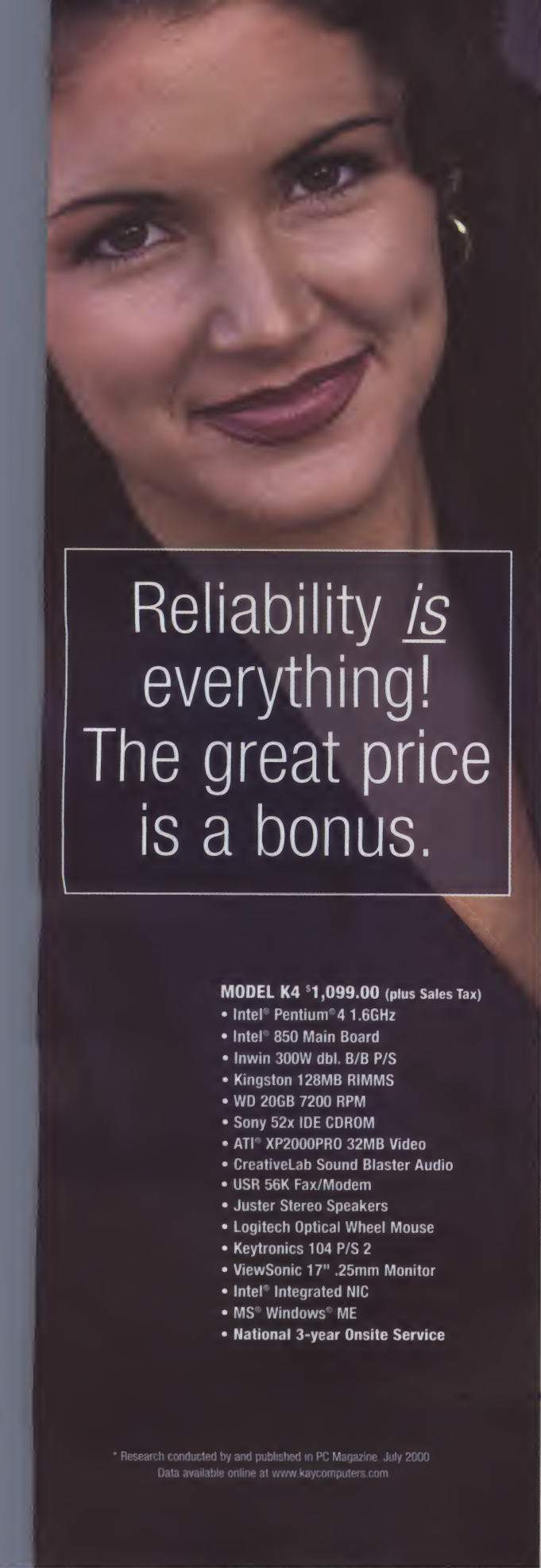
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Getting perfect pictures out of your camera and into the hands of friends and family is a snap—with the right software tools.

BY MATTHEW KLARE

Digital photography still has enough rough edges that people who make photography either their living or their art can present convincing arguments in favor of film. But by now the image quality and convenience of even consumer-level digital photography makes it a great solution for those who simply want to share their photos with family and friends. When you consider the immediacy of digital imaging and the ease with which you can share images online, a digital camera is becoming a must-have option in the camera bag.

The simple steps that follow will lead you through the basics of setting up your system for digital photography, making your images look their best, and sharing them online. No one digital camera will prove the best choice for every buyer, but for our purposes we chose an Olympus Camedia C-2040 Zoom. Selling for about \$350, it's an

affordable option for many buyers, and its respectable 2.11-megapixel resolution, excellent image quality, and rich assortment of both automatic and manual features have made it a popular model.

Another expense you should seriously consider is a full-fledged image-editing package. The software that comes with digital cameras typically provides some image-editing functionality, but some packages make it difficult or impossible to handle seemingly easy tasks, such as printing at a custom size or saving an image at a specific resolution. Of the several full-featured, low-cost solutions available, we chose Adobe's relatively new Photoshop Elements. Although it's built on much of the same code as Photoshop 6 and contains most of Photoshop's features, Elements costs only \$99. Plus, it includes a few features geared toward amateur photographers, such as automatic image adjustment.

1. Check your system

A USB connection provides a fast and convenient means of transferring images from camera to computer, and today most cameras connect to a USB port. If your system is more than a few years old, you may have to install an aftermarket USB card. Two companies that offer them for about \$20 are Belkin and Linksys.

Another must-have is plenty of system memory, largely because image editing is memory-intensive. We recommend a minimum of 128MB of RAM. If you don't have that much memory, you can buy it and install it cheaply and easily.

Finally, consider upgrading your hard drive if you're anywhere near maxing it out. You'll want at least a free gigabyte or two to hold your images.

2. Install the image-transfer software

Depending on the camera you buy, the installation routine may present you with numerous software titles to install. Check the software documentation that came with the camera to determine which applications are required to transfer images from the camera, and which you can do without.

Tip: When installing image-manipulation software, the installation routine may ask if you'd like to use the software to open all JPEG images as well as images stored in other formats. If you answer "yes," the software will open such files when you double-click on them in Windows Explorer, for instance. If you'd rather keep your system's file associations intact, answer "no."

3. Install the USB driver

If you're running Windows Me or 2000, you already have a USB driver that will support the camera. If you're running Windows 98 or 98 Second Edition, you'll have to install the USB driver your camera provides. With the computer running and the Utilities CD-ROM in the drive, connect the USB cable to the computer and then to the camera. When you turn on the camera, Windows should automatically start the New Hardware wizard to prompt you for the location of the required driver. Refer to your camera's documentation for the driver's location and any additional instructions.

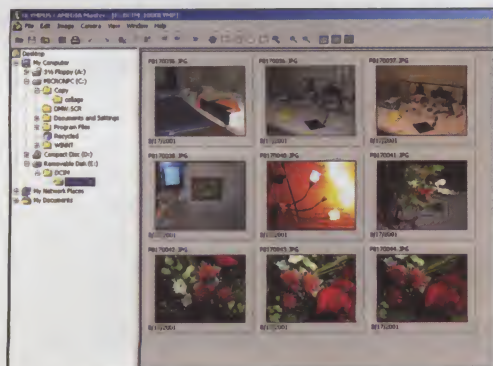
4. Install your image-editing software

Insert your image-editing CD and follow the "typical" installation routine. As with the software that came with your camera, expect to be asked which types of files you want the program to open.

5. Transfer images to your system

After you've shot a few pictures, try transferring them to your system. With your computer running, connect the USB cable from the computer to the camera and turn on the camera. Some cameras, such as

Epson's PhotoPC, automatically start an image-transfer utility when you connect them and offer several options for handling the transfer. With other cameras, including the Olympus C-2040, you'll have to start the image transfer yourself.



With the Olympus C-2040 Zoom, you can transfer images by dragging and dropping from the camera's storage card.

Staying Off the Universal Serial Bus

USB is the most popular means of moving digital photos from camera to computer, but it's not the only one. Memory-card readers from companies such as SanDisk and Lexar Media accommodate SmartMedia, CompactFlash, and PC Cards. These readers are available in serial, parallel, USB, and SCSI flavors. Another type of reader, the FlashPath floppy-disk adapter, is the size and shape of a 3.5-inch floppy disk. It has a slot into which you insert a SmartMedia card, making it readable through your floppy drive.

One of our favorite transfer alternatives is found in Sony's MVC-CD300 camera, which writes images to 3.5-inch, 156MB CD-R and CD-RW discs. It's the ideal vacation camera, because the discs hold many images, are fairly inexpensive (around \$5 for a CD-R and \$7 for a CD-RW), and are eminently portable. Reading images from the discs requires a CD-R or CD-RW drive, or a free driver that lets CD-ROM drives read packet-written discs.

Cameras' utilities vary in their approach to image transfers. Epson cameras' utility copies the files for you. The Olympus Camedia software uses an Explorer-like interface that lets you cut and paste files between the camera's storage card and your system's hard drive.

Tip: Most digital cameras sold today support the Design rule for Camera File system (DCF), which enables your system to read and write to memory cards in your camera as if they were standard disk volumes. To browse, copy, or delete files on your camera's storage card as you would any other files, look for a removable drive within Windows Explorer or My Computer. Then, create the folder "DCIM" and then the subfolder that corresponds to your digital camera—"100OLYMP" for the C-2040 Zoom.

6. Edit for color and contrast

If your image editor provides automatic fixes for color and contrast, begin experimenting with them. You may find that an image you thought looked fine was being held back by a color cast, or that bumping contrast up a bit really brings your image to life. In Photoshop Elements, go to the Enhance menu and try Auto Levels and Auto Contrast to see what the program can do on its own. Or choose Variations to see your image with various color-balance settings. When you're ready to experiment a bit more, delve into Color options under the Enhance menu, including Hue/Saturation. Also check out Elements' Recipes and tutorials, which provide excellent how-to instructions for many operations.

Tip: Don't be afraid to experiment with your images. If you want to lose any changes you've made, you can simply close the file without saving it.

7. Crop it

You'll likely crop images fairly often. If a hastily snapped image isn't framed as nicely as it could have been, a little cropping will fix the problem. Or maybe Aunt Lucy looks fabulous in the picture, but you've never seen Uncle Lou look quite so tortured.



By cropping images you can improve the framing or remove unwanted elements.

TUNE-UP

To crop an image, first make sure it's sized to fit in the window so you can see the entire image. In Elements, check this by clicking on View and selecting Fit on Screen. Next, select the Crop tool from the tool palette. Using this tool, click and drag a rectangle around the portion of the image you want to keep. Everything outside your rectangle becomes darkened to help you visualize the final image. If you want to crop to a different rectangle, press the Escape key to remove the crop mask and try again. When you like what you see, double-click the crop tool inside the cropped area.

Tip: You can also crop by using the standard rectangular selection tool to mark the portion of the image you want to keep, then choosing Image > Crop to cut away the remainder.

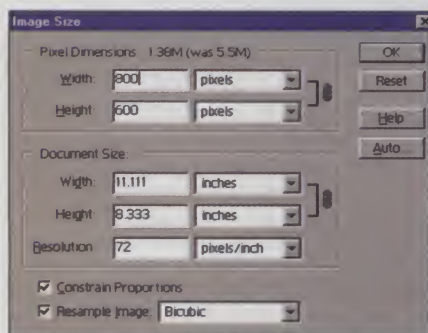
8. Size your shots

Your most common editing tasks will be setting your images' resolution and resizing them. It makes sense to capture 2-megapixel or even 3-megapixel images for creating 5-by-7-inch or 8-by-10-inch prints. But you'll want to reduce file sizes to make images load quickly and fit on viewers' screens.

Most people set their 17-inch monitors' resolution to 1,024 by 768 or, at most, 1,280 by 1,024, so images sized to 640 by 480 work nicely. A typical 2-megapixel image of 1,600 by 1,200 wouldn't fit on the

screen when viewed full size. And it demands a file size about six times as large as a 640-by-480 image using the same type of compression.

To resize images in Photoshop Elements, click Image > Resize > Image Size. To resize the image without distorting it, or to retain the image's aspect ratio, make sure the Constrain Proportions option is checked. If



Photoshop Elements' Resize command lets you specify the precise size you want. Choose Constrain Proportions to keep the image from being distorted.

you know the pixel dimensions you need, say 640 by 480, you can then enter either the width or height near the top of the dialog, and Elements will fill in the other value to maintain the same aspect ratio. If the ratio is different than the size you want to use, you may need to crop the image down to the size you need, or try entering the smaller dimension first and then cropping.

You can also specify image size in inches and resolution using the same dialog box. This can be handy when preparing to print. If you know you want to print at 600 dpi, for instance, setting the resolution to 600 dpi in this dialog will give you the measurements of the image as it would print.

To keep file sizes manageable, save your files using an aggressive compression technique such as JPEG. Using TIFF will keep your file sizes large, often a few megabytes.

Tip: You may need to sharpen images after you scale them down to keep them crisp. To sharpen using Elements, go to Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask, and try various values for Amount and Radius. For photographic images, a low radius value, from 0.2 to 2, often works best.

9. Share with others

Now that you've created beautiful images, you're probably eager to share them with friends and family. Digital-camera newbies who like the idea of having prints made will find a wealth of options, including buying a color inkjet printer or using a Web-based photo-printing service. Increasingly, sharing digital images means posting them on a personal Web site or using a site that lets you create online

photo albums to share with others. Services such as Ofoto or Shutterfly let you create free online albums, in hopes that you or your visitors will order prints. (See "Photo Finishers" in the Features section.)

You can also share photos directly via e-mail. Using Microsoft Outlook,



To insert images in e-mail, choose Format > Rich Text (HTML) in Outlook Express, or Format > HTML or Rich Text in Outlook.

for instance, you can attach the file by clicking on the paper-clip icon on the toolbar, browsing to the location of the file, and double-clicking the filename. You can also create an HTML e-mail message and insert a picture into it using the Insert Picture command. This creates a message with your photo embedded in the body, so the recipient can read your note and see the picture without having to open a file. ▼

Improve Your Images

You can snap up plenty of information about digital photography online, from buyer's guides to reviews to tips for managing tasks. A good place to start is ShortCourses (www.shortcourses.com), which contains courseware to teach you to use your camera and do some digital editing. Another top specialty site, Digital Photography Review (www.dpreview.com), includes detailed reviews, several heavily used forums, and links to other informative digital-photo sites.

Manufacturers' Web sites are also good sources of information, not only on camera models but also on capturing and editing images. Sites run by Adobe (www.adobe.com/learnexplore.html) and Corel (www.designer.com/focus/articles.html) provide some good information, though naturally much of it is oriented toward their respective products.

Finally, editorial sites such as CNET (www.cnet.com), ZDNet (www.zdnet.com), Creativepro.com (www.creativepro.com), and The Imaging Resource (www.imaging-resource.com) offer an assortment of reviews, as well as advice about digital photography and imaging. (CNET and ZDNet are owned by CNET Networks, Computer Shopper's parent company.)

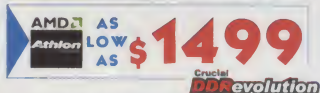


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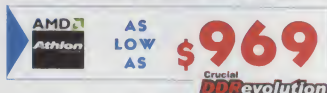
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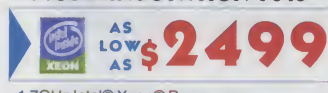
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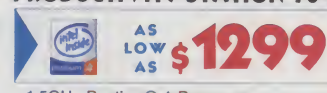
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ME VERSUS WINDOWS ME

Dear Alfred:

When I open the Windows Me Control Panel, it always comes up as a detailed list. I change the list to icons, but the next time I open Control Panel, it's back to the list. Can you help?

Austin Chappelle

Fortunately, I have a test system with four bootable hard drives, each with a different version of Windows. It makes it easier to research questions like this.

First, open Control Panel and select Tools > Folder Options > View. Check "Remember each folder's view settings," click OK, and use the View menu to choose your desired level of detail. Or use the left-column choice to "Display only commonly used Control Panel options." If you select this, you'll view only larger icons, and changes with the View menu will have no effect.

If this fails, a known bug in Windows Me may be to blame. If you go from Control Panel to Scheduled Tasks, and then use the Back button, Control Panel will switch to the list menu. In this case, clearing the "Remember each folder's view settings" checkbox will cause it to use the default folder settings.

DOT'S ENOUGH

Dear Alfred:

I just bought a 17-inch monitor with a 0.25mm dot pitch. What's the proper resolution for this monitor?

Jose Marcos

There is no "proper" monitor resolution. My advice is to use the maximum resolution the display can accurately produce. If your 0.25mm-dot-pitch monitor is a shadow-mask design, it should be able to handle XGA (1,024 by 768 pixels). If it's an aperture-grille design with a stripe pitch of 0.25mm, it's probably not fine enough to manage XGA, so you'll have to settle for SVGA (800 by 600 pixels). If the higher resolu-

tion makes it difficult to read text and icons, you

can use Windows' settings to make them larger. Although the process varies depending on OS version, in Windows 98, for instance, just right-click on an open space on your desktop, and select Properties > Settings > Advanced. Under the Font Size drop-down, select Large Fonts or Other, and scale to your heart's desire. Or you can buy a new utility called LiquidView (\$49.95) from Portrait Technologies (www.portrait.com) that makes it easy to make text and icons larger on high-resolution monitors.

RUNNING OUT OF ROOM

Dear Alfred:

All four of my IDE connections are currently in use—by a 20GB hard drive, an LS-120 drive,

a CD-ROM, and a CD-RW. I'd like to add a 13GB hard drive as inexpensively as possible. I could add a SCSI card and a SCSI CD-ROM, but that seems expensive. And I'd sacrifice performance if I moved my LS-120 to a floppy connection. Can I add another IDE card, or should I just replace my hard drive with a larger drive?

L.D. Taylor

Let's start with the LS-120. It's not all that fast a drive, so you may not be giving up as much as you think by moving it to a floppy connection. Next, SCSI cards don't have to be expensive; you can find PCI SCSI-2 models for less than \$60.

Your least expensive solution will probably be to add another IDE channel. You can get PCI or ISA IDE adapter cards for less than \$30. Ultra ATA/66 cards cost more, but because your CD drives probably can't take advantage of the extra bandwidth, you could move one or both to a slower, less expensive IDE adapter, and add a second hard drive to one of your existing channels. ▼

tip of the month

COMPUTER, SAY "CHEESE!"

It's holiday time again, but it's gift-giving time year-round as readers send in their favorite tips, and we send out the sought-after tipster prize packages. Perhaps you know a handy use for a familiar tool, like this month's tipster does.

Dear Alfred:

Documenting my system's BIOS settings is literally a snap, now that I use my digital camera. I take pictures of each BIOS screen, with the camera's macro setting enabled and the flash disabled. After I upload them to my hard drive, I print them and save them to floppy disks. If I should misplace the printouts, I can use the floppies to make new prints.

Herbert W. Pearson

What a great idea! I'd add that a plastic bag taped inside your computer case's lid or on the bottom of the case makes a perfect place to store the prints. Just make sure the plastic doesn't cover any ventilation holes.

I, too, often use a digital camera when

working with my computers. I take pictures of cable connections and jumper settings before I change them, so I have a fighting chance of

putting them back where they belong when I'm done. If you don't have a digital camera, a Polaroid can be an excellent substitute.

Send us your favorite tip, and you

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BUYING ADVISOR

by Asa Somers

BUYING
ADVISOR

A Blockbuster Video System

The Mac is still the ideal platform for video editing and 3D animation, but perfection has its price.

YOU DON'T NEED PRO-LEVEL firepower to edit simple videos on your desktop. Making real movies on your computer, however, is another story.

Kati London, a 25-year-old staff-development coordinator for the Omega Institute of Holistic Studies, came to us in search of a system that could handle digital video editing, 3D animation, and video compositing—the kinds of processing-intensive tasks that require not only the means to get the raw footage into the system, but the power to move the pixels around and compile the finished product, and the space to store it.

She's looked into the Mac G4 because most people she knows who do digital imaging use Macs, but she's accustomed to PCs. The Mac-versus-PC question is one desktop-video jockeys must ask as they consider purchasing a new system. The quick answer is Macs are better suited to video editing. The software has gone through more generations on this platform, so it works more elegantly with the Mac OS. And even with its substantially slower clock speed, a PowerPC-equipped Mac processes images faster than a comparable PC. But Macs are still more expensive and offer less flexibility in terms of inter-platform componentry.

London said she could spend \$4,000 but didn't really want to. For \$4,000, she could get an excellent system on either platform, but she could spend a lot less on the PC side. And don't forget: If you're serious about video editing, you need some expensive software that could easily take you over budget. One such package, Adobe After Effects, costs \$649 direct from Adobe for either OS. Our first stop was Apple's Web site. Because Macs have been longtime favorites of artistic types, the systems have evolved in this direction, offering features and design

elements that make them ideally suited for creative tasks. IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports and preloaded digital-video-capture software are two such elements you'll find in a G4.

We configured London's system with the fastest processor available, the 867MHz G4. We also selected 256MB of RAM, an 80GB Ultra ATA hard drive, an Apple SuperDrive

CHALLENGE

USER PROFILE

Kati London, 25, artist and staff-development coordinator from Red Hook, N.Y.

COMPUTING NEEDS

A powerful desktop system for video editing and 3D modeling, with the best mix of performance and features, for less than \$4,000.

for reading and writing DVDs and CDs, and a fast GeForce2 MX graphics card with 32MB of dedicated graphics RAM, which delivers plenty of power for video manipulation.

The most costly component was the display. Apple has standardized on flat-panel LCDs, which are space-saving and exceedingly bright, but expensive. The 15-inch model for \$599 was the least costly, bringing the system price to \$3,248. London could save some money by substituting a nice 19-inch CRT monitor from another source, but she'll still pay more for the graphics-oriented elegance of the Mac platform.



Apple Power Mac G4

Switching to the PC platform, a Gateway 700XL with a 2GHz Pentium 4 processor, 512MB of PC800 RDRAM, an 80GB 7,200rpm hard drive, a 64MB DDR GeForce3 graphics subsystem with TV out, an IEEE 1394 card, 16x DVD and 16x/10x/40x CD-RW drives, a 19-inch Diamondtron monitor, surround-sound speakers with subwoofer, and Microsoft Office XP costs only \$2,608.

Even with the necessary software, the system would cost less than \$3,300.

We were able to fashion a similar system out of the Compaq Presario 5000 once we changed the default configuration, with the exception of the memory, which was slower SDRAM. We configured the system with a 2GHz processor, 256MB of RAM, a 120GB hard drive, a DVD/CD-RW combo drive, a 17-inch monitor, and a 32MB DDR ATI All-in-Wonder Radeon graphics card. The Radeon card is slower than the Gateway's blistering graphics adapter, but it features a built-in TV tuner and video capture. Plus, the system's dedicated Digital Video Center also provides IEEE 1394 and USB ports, as well as all sorts of video software. With these upgrades, the price came to \$2,506.

HP offered a Pavilion with many of the same specs, including a 2GHz Pentium 4, 256MB of PC800 RDRAM, a 100GB hard drive, a DVD/CD-RW combo drive, and a 64MB GeForce2 MX 400 graphics card with TV out, for only \$2,240.

Dell also offered a compelling deal in the Dimension 8200. Configured with a 2GHz processor, 256MB of PC800 RDRAM, a 100GB hard drive, a 32MB GeForce2 MX graphics card with TV out, and a DVD/CD-RW combo drive, the 8200 came in at a refreshingly low \$2,328. At press time, the system shipped with a free Umax 3400

scanner and the cool Premium Movie Studio bundle, which features two IEEE 1394 ports on a PCI card and one on an external box that connects by cable to the back of the system.

If London is willing to spend the extra money, we recommend the Power Mac

SOLUTION

THE ADVISOR'S CHOICE

If London is willing to spend an extra \$1,000 and learn a new operating system, the Power Mac G4 is the best system and platform for her needs. If she sticks with a more affordable PC, any of the PCs we configured would be equal to the task.

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G4, which is perfectly suited to her intended tasks. If not, she can get an able PC with great all-around speed that's still very competent at video editing. In this case, any of the PCs we looked at will do. ▼

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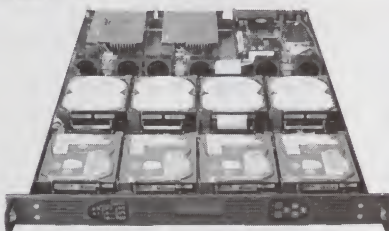
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Maxtor

Formerly
Quantum Drives

ULTRA ATA/100 IDE

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30.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP30000AS	\$105
40.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP40000AS	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	7200	QMP60000AS	\$159

SCA & SCA ULTRA 160 Single Connector Attachment

9.2GB	4MB	7200	XC309100SCA	\$149
18.4GB	4MB	7200	XC318400SCA	\$175
18.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW018J2	\$205
36.7GB	4MB	7200	XC336700SCA	\$320
36.7GB	8MB	10,000	KW036J4	\$399
73.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW073J8	\$769

ULTRA 160 SCSI (160 MB/sec)

9.2GB	4MB	7200	XC309100LW	\$149
18.4GB	4MB	7200	XC318400LW	\$175
18.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW018L2	\$205
36.7GB	4MB	7200	XC336700LW	\$320
36.7GB	8MB	10,000	KW036L4	\$399
73.4GB	8MB	10,000	KW073L8	\$769

Maxtor

(dirtcheapdrives.com/max)

ULTRA ATA-100 IDE - 7200 RPMs

20.0GB	2MB	7200	M5T020H2	\$89
30.0GB	2MB	7200	M5T030H3	\$105
40.0GB	2MB	7200	M5T040H4	\$119
60.5GB	2MB	7200	M5T060H6	\$165

ULTRA ATA-100 IDE - 5400 RPMs

20.0GB	2MB	5400	4K020H1	\$79
40.0GB	2MB	5400	4K040H2	\$93
60.0GB	2MB	5400	4K060H3	\$139
80.0GB	2MB	5400	4K080H4	\$195
100.0GB	2MB	5400	4W100H6	\$245
120.0GB	2MB	5400	4G120H6	\$Call
160.0GB	2MB	5400	4G160H8	\$Call

1394 External Hard Drive Kits

40.0GB	2MB	5400	X01FWRA040	\$225
80.0GB	2MB	5400	X01FWRA080	\$295

IBM

(dirtcheapdrives.com/ibm)

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40.0GB	2MB	7200	07N6654	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	7200	07N6655	\$169
75.0GB	2MB	7200	07N4777	\$255

Ultra 160 SCSI

9.1GB	4MB	10,000	07N6360	\$219
18.3GB	4MB	10,000	07N6350	\$279
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	07N6340	\$465
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	07N6300	\$839

SCA & SCA Ultra 160

9.1GB	4MB	10,000	07N6390	\$219
18.3GB	4MB	10,000	07N6380	\$279
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	07N6370	\$465
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	07N6310	\$839

Microdrives

340MB	128K	12 ms	MD340A	\$205
512MB	128K	12 ms	MD512A	\$265
1.0GB	128K	12 ms	MD1GBA	\$355

FUJITSU

(dirtcheapdrives.com/fuji)

Ultra 160 SCSI

18.2GB	4MB	10,000	MAJ3182MP	\$205
36.4GB	4MB	10,000	MAJ3364MP	\$399
73.5GB	4MB	10,000	MAN3735MP	\$809

Ultra SCA

18.2GB	4MB	10,000	MAJ3182MC	\$205
36.4GB	4MB	10,000	MAJ3364MC	\$399
73.5GB	4MB	10,000	MAN3735MC	\$809

HARD DRIVES

Seagate

(dirtcheapdrives.com/seagate)

ULTRA ATA/100 IDE

Capacity	Cache	RPM	Item Number	Price
20.4GB	2MB	5400	ST320410A	\$82
20.0GB	2MB	7200	ST320011A	\$90
40.8GB	2MB	5400	ST340810A	\$98
40.0GB	2MB	7200	ST340016A	\$112
60.0GB	2MB	5400	ST360020A	\$135
60.0GB	2MB	7200	ST360021A	\$159
80.0GB	2MB	5400	ST380020A	\$198
80.0GB	2MB	7200	ST380021A	\$215

ULTRA SCSI

18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318417N	\$179
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ULTRA Wide SCSI

18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318417W	\$170
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Ultra 160 SCSI (up to 160MB/sec)

9.2GB	4MB	10,000	ST39205LW	\$170
18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318437LW	\$170
18.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST318406LW	\$225
18.4GB	8MB	15,000	ST318452LW	\$329
36.7GB	2MB	7200	ST336737LW	\$309
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	ST336706LW	\$425
36.7GB	8MB	15,000	ST336752LW	\$559
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST373405LW	\$769
181.6GB	16MB	7200	ST1181677LWV	\$1449

SCA & SCA 160 (Single Connector Attachment)

9.2GB	4MB	10,000	ST39205LC	\$170
18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318437LC	\$170
18.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST318406LC	\$225
18.4GB	8MB	15,000	ST318452LC	\$329
36.7GB	2MB	7200	ST336737LC	\$309
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	ST336706LC	\$425
36.7GB	8MB	15,000	ST336752LC	\$559
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST373405LC	\$769
181.6GB	16MB	7200	ST1181677LCV	\$1449

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73.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST373405FC	\$779
18.4GB	8MB	15,000	ST318452FC	\$339
36.7GB	8MB	15,000	ST336752FC	\$569

WESTERN DIGITAL

(dirtcheapdrives.com/wd)

ULTRA ATA-100 IDE

20.0GB	2MB	5400	WD200AB	\$78
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30.0GB	2MB	7200	WD300BB	\$99
40.0GB	2MB	5400	WD400AB	\$102
40.0GB	2MB	7200	WD400BB	\$115
60.0GB	2MB	5400	WD600AB	\$132
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80.0GB	2MB	7200	WD800BB	\$205
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1394 External Hard Drive Kits

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IBM Hard Drives

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10.0GB	9.5mm	4200	07N4390	\$92
20.0GB	9.5mm	4200	07N6713	\$120
30.0GB	9.5mm	4200	07N6714	\$189
48.0GB	9.5mm	5400	07N6718	\$419

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20-40Gig	DDS-4 DAT, 288MB/min, SOT11000AI	\$819 \$33 (DAT150M)
160-320Gig	DDS-4 DAT/Loader, 840MB/min, TSL-S11000	\$2745 \$33 (DAT150M)

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50-100GB	AIT-2 Internal (SDX-500CI)	\$2319
50-100GB	AIT-2 External (SDX-5500C)	\$2529
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	External, our case, BH1AA-YFX	\$1329 \$65 (DLT4)
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Minicartridge	Int.	Extra Tapes
ATAPI (IDE)		
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TR5 10-20Gig (STT220000A)	\$269	\$35 (TR5)
SCSI	Int.	Ext.
TR4 4-8Gig (STT28000N)	\$209	\$269 \$25 (TR4)
SCSI RCVT Includes NT & Netware server software only. Features hardware data compression.		
TR4 4-8Gig (STT28000NC)	\$345	\$405 \$25 (TR4)
TR5 10-20Gig (STT220000N)	\$445	\$505 \$35 (TR5)

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Internals

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50-100GB	SLR100, 36 GB/hr, (6422E1)	\$2119 \$81 (431891)

Externals

12-24GB	SLR24, 8.6 GB/hr, (6395UE)	\$929 \$45 (431842)
20-40GB	SLR7, 21.6 GB/hr, (6622UE)	\$1001 \$50 (432187)
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12-24Gig	DDS-3 DAT 132MB/min, STD224000N	\$645 \$10 (DAT120M)
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Holds 2 half height or 1 full height drive.	\$69 (FHCASE)	\$95 (FHCASEW)	\$109* (FHCASE160)
Dual 3.5" drive model	\$69 (DUAL3.5CASE)	\$89 (DUAL3.5CWCW)	\$99* (DUAL3.5C160)
Takes two 3.5" drives	\$99 (DUALCASET)	\$129 (DUALCASETW)	\$139* (DUALCASE160)
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Holds 14 half height or 6 full height drives.	\$585 (18BAYCASE)	\$689 (18BAYCASEFW)	\$699* (18BAYCASE160)
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A2906KIT PCI 32 Bit SCSI (For PC or Mac)		\$55
T1350 EPP Parallel to SCSI Adapter		\$69
T1460D2KIT PCMCIA type 2, 3, or 4 to SCSI		\$119
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A19160 Ultra 160 SCSI	\$149	\$219
A29160 Ultra 160 SCSI 64 bit	\$205	\$289
A39160 Ultra 160 SCSI 64 bit PCI, 2 channel		\$325
A29160N Ultra 160 SCSI 32 bit PCI		\$279
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DC390U2W	32 Bit PCI Ultra-2 SCSI Dual Channel controller	\$139
DC390U3W	1 Ultra 160 Channel & 1 Ultra Wide channel kit	\$189

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40X	NEC	CDR3010	85	256K	\$67	\$127
40X	Plextor	PX40TS (TRAY)	85	512K	\$87	\$147

WIDE SCSI CD ROM

40X	Plextor	PX40TSUW	85	512K	\$99	\$189
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IDE CD ROM

Speed	Brand	Model	ms	Buffer	Int	Ext
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48X	Mitsumi	CRMCFX48X	65	256K	\$39	\$95
52X	Creative	SBCD52	100	256K	\$37	\$95
52X	Sony	CDU5211	85	256K	\$39	\$95
56X	Acer	CD656A	85	128K	\$39	\$95

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HP	24x10x40 IDE	(Q2097A)	\$255
Plextor	16x10x40 IDE	(PXW1610TAR)	\$185
Acer	16x10x40 IDE	(CRW1610A)	\$129
Yamaha	20x10x40 IDE	(CRW2200E2)	\$189
TDK	24x10x40 IDE	(AI-241040)	\$159
Plextor	24x10x40 IDE	(PXW2410TAR)	\$209

SCSI CD-RW Drives

Plextor	12x10x32 Int/Ext	(PXW1210T5B/X)	\$219/\$279
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Plextor 8x8x24 USB	Ext. (PXS88TU/SW)	\$265
CD CyClone CDRevo 4x4x32 USB	iMac Blue/Ext. (7010)	\$179
CD CyClone CDRevo 4x4x32 USB	iMac Purple/Ext. (7011)	\$179
CD CyClone CDRevo 4x4x32 USB	iMac Ice/Ext. (7012)	\$179
Sony 12x8x32 1394	Ext. (CRX1600L/A2)	\$225
CD CyClone 12x10x32 1394	Kit Blue/Ext. (7020)	\$255
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CD MEDIA

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12x	Platinum 5/20/50/100 pack	\$6/\$24/\$57/\$106

Printable CD-R 74 in jewel case

16x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$4/\$15/\$35/\$66
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CD-R 80 minute media

24x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$4/\$13/\$32/\$59
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4x	Budget 5/20/50/100 pack	\$6/\$24/\$56/\$104
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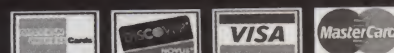
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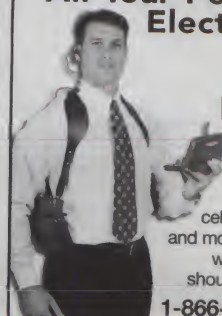
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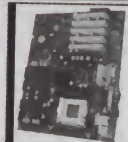
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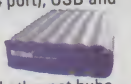
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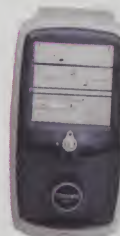


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s1110120	DWL-500 11Mbps Wireless LAN PCI Card w/PC Card	\$119.95
s1110119	DWL-1000AP 11Mbps Wireless LAN Access Point	\$219.95
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4



MOTHERBOARDS

KU	CPU	PCI	ISA	AGP	MEM	STYLE	PRICE
IC694TPRO	FCPGA 1/2	5		1+AMR	3/168	ATX	\$74
ICK7T266PRO	SOCKET A	5		1+CNR	3/DDR	ATX	\$98
ICK7T1760-BR	SOCKET A	6		1+CNR	3/168	ATX	\$102
IC815EPRO	FCPGA 1	6		CNR	4/168	ATX	\$106
IC845PRO	P4(SKT 423)	5		1+CNR	3/168	ATX	\$110
ICK7MASTER	SOCKET A	5		1+CNR	2/DDR	ATX	\$112
IC815EPPRO	FCPGA 1	6		CNR	4/168	ATX	\$117
ICPRO266MSTR	FCPGA 1	5		1+CNR3DDR/168ATX			\$117
ICK7T266PRO2SOCKET A(XP)5				1+CNR	3/DDR	ATX	\$117
IC845SPRO25L P4(SKT 478)		6		1+CNR	3/168	ATX	\$122
IC850PRO25L P4(SKT 423)	4			1+CNR4/RIMM		ATX	\$122
ICPR266MSTR-R FCPGA 1	5			1+CNR3DDR/168ATX			\$127
IC850PRO	P4(SKT 423)	5		1+CNR4/RIMM		ATX	\$144
ICK7TMASTER	SOCKET A	6		1+CNR	4/168	ATX	\$204
ICK7MASTER-S	SOCKET A	5		1+CNR	2/DDR	ATX	\$257


CPU	PCI	ISA	AGP	MEM	STYLE	PRICE
GA-7IXE	SLOT A	5	2	1	3/168 ATX	\$69
GA-7DXC	SOCKET A	5		1+AMR	2/DDR ATX	\$87
GA-7ZX-1R5	SOCKET A	5		1+AMR	3/168 ATX	\$102
GA-7ZX-1	SOCKET A	5	1	1+AMR	3/168 ATX	\$102
GA-7ZXR5	SOCKET A	5	1	1+AMR	3/168 ATX	\$107
GA-7DX	SOCKET A	5		1+AMR	2/DDR ATX	\$117
GA-8IDX3	P4(SKT 423)	6		1+CNR	3/168 ATX	\$119
GA-7ZXR-R3	SOCKET A	6		1+AMR	3/168 ATX	\$127
GA-8IDX	P4(SKT 478)	6		1	3/168 ATX	\$127
GA-8IDXH	P4(SKT 478)	6	LAN	1	3/168 ATX	\$132
GA-7DXR	SOCKET A	5		1+AMR	3/DDR ATX	\$132
GA-8TXC	P4(SKT 423)	5		1+CNR	4/RIMM ATX	\$142
GA-8ITX	P4(SKT 478)	6		1	4/RIMM ATX	\$157
GA-8TX	P4(SKT 423)	5		1+CNR	4/RIMM ATX	\$159
GA-8ITXR	P4(SKT 478)	6		1	4/RIMM ATX	\$187

PROCESSORS

INTEL	www.intel.com		
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	667MHZ 128K	\$39
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	700MHZ 128K	\$42
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	733MHZ 128K	\$43
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	766MHZ 128K	\$44
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	800MHZ 128K	\$5
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	850MHZ 128K	\$54
INTEL	CELERON-A FCPGA	900MHZ 128K	\$60
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	667MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$117
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	700MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$112
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	733MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$112
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	750MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$119
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	800MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$127
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	800MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$124
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	850MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$129
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	866MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$137
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	933MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$162
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	1000MHZ 256K FCPGA	\$192
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	1100MHZ 256K FCPGA 2	\$44
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	1200MHZ 256K FCPGA 2	\$289
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	750MHZ 256K SECC	\$97
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	800MHZ 256K SECC	\$102
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	800MHZ 256K SECC	\$127
INTEL	PENTIUM III 100MHZ BUS	850MHZ 256K SECC	\$137
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	866MHZ 256K SECC	\$144
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	933MHZ 256K SECC	\$209
INTEL	PENTIUM III 133MHZ BUS	1000MHZ 256K SECC	\$239
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1400MHZ 256K SOCKET423	\$124
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1500MHZ 256K SOCKET423	\$147
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1700MHZ 256K SOCKET423	\$171
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1700MHZ 256K SOCKET478	\$199
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1800MHZ 256K SOCKET423	\$269
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	1900MHZ 256K SOCKET478	\$374
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	2000MHZ 256K SOCKET478	\$589
INTEL	PENTIUM 4 400MHZ BUS	2000MHZ 256K SOCKET423	\$599

AMD	K6 II W/3D NOW	100 MHZ BUS	P450MHZ	\$29
AMD	K6 II W/3D NOW	100 MHZ BUS	P500MHZ	\$31
AMD	K6 II W/3D NOW	100 MHZ BUS	P550MHZ	\$34
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P700MHZ	\$35
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P750MHZ	\$37
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P800MHZ	\$45
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P850MHZ	\$49
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P900MHZ	\$53
AMD	DURON	200 MHZ BUS	P950MHZ	\$62
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P850MHZ	\$57
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P900MHZ	\$59
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P950MHZ	\$62
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P1000MHZ	\$82
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AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P1100MHZ	\$83
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AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P1200MHZ	\$90
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	266 MHZ BUS	P1200MHZ	\$93
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P1300MHZ	\$103
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	266 MHZ BUS	P1333MHZ	\$104
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	200 MHZ BUS	P1400MHZ	\$118
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON	266 MHZ BUS	P1400MHZ	\$129
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON MP	266 MHZ BUS	P1000MHZ	\$154
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON MP	266 MHZ BUS	P1200MHZ	\$164
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON MP	266 MHZ BUS	P1400MHZ	\$229
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON XP	266 MHZ BUS	1500+	\$119
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON XP	266 MHZ BUS	1600+	\$144
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON XP	266 MHZ BUS	1700+	\$179
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON XP	266 MHZ BUS	1800+	\$239
AMD	SOCKET A ATHLON XP	266 MHZ BUS	1900+	\$299

NETWORKING

	www.3com.com	
3C905BTXNM	ETHERNET RJ45 10/100BT NO REMOTE WAKE PCI	\$37
3C905CXTXNM	ETHERNET 32 BIT 10/100XL NO REMOTE WAKE PCI	\$37
3C905CTXM	ETHERNET RJ45 10/100BT W/REMOTE WAKE PCI	\$38
3C905CXTM	ETHERNET 32 BIT 10/100XL W/REMOTE WAKE PCI	\$38
EDIMAX NETWORKING PRODUCTS www.edimax.com		
EDEN2000XA	ETHERNET RJ45/10BT/BNC/AUI ISA FULL DUPLEX	\$17
EDEN5200XA	ETHERNET RJ45/10BT/BNC/AUI PCI FULL DUPLEX	\$18
DERN9130	ETHERNET RJ45 10/100 PCI	\$24
DER5394SR	NETWORK HUB 5 PORT 10BASE-T	\$35

MEMORY

16MB4X32 EDO60NS\$8
32MB8X32 EDO60NS\$14
64MB16X32 EDO60NS\$17
128MB32X32 EDO60NS\$107

64MB	8X64	60NS 3.3VOLT	\$77
64MB	8X72 (unbuffered)	60NS 3.3VOLT ECC	\$89
64MB	8X72 (buffered)	60NS 3.3VOLT ECC	\$49
128MB	16X64	60NS 3.3VOLT	\$169
128MB	16X72 (unbuffered)	60NS 3.3VOLT ECC	\$174
128MB	16X72 (buffered)	60NS 3.3VOLT ECC	\$153
256MB	32X72 (buffered)	60NS 3.3VOLT ECC	\$244

32MB	4X64	10NS	\$11
64MB	8X64	10NS	\$12
128MB	16X64	10NS	\$18

32MB	4X64	8NS	\$7
64MB	8X64	8NS	\$9
64MB PC133	8X64	7.5NS	\$9
64MB	8X72	8NS	\$11
128MB	16X64	8NS	\$14
128MB PC133	16X64	7.5NS	\$14
128MB	16X72	8NS	\$16
128MB PC133	16X72	7.5NS	\$17
256MB	32X64	8NS	\$21
256MB PC133	32X64	7.5NS	\$21
256MB	32X72	8NS	\$25
256MB PC133	32X72	7.5NS	\$25
512MB	64X72	8NS	\$49
512MB PC133	64X64	7.5NS	\$49
512MB PC133	64X72	7.5NS	\$52
1024MB	PC133128X72	7.5NS	\$204

128MB	16X64	200MHZ	\$17
128MB	16X64	266MHZ	\$17
128MB	16X72	200MHZ	\$21
128MB	16X72	266MHZ	\$21
256MB	32X64	200MHZ	\$31
256MB	32X64	266MHZ	\$31
256MB	32X72	200MHZ	\$36
256MB	32X72	266MHZ	\$36
512MB	64X72	266MHZ	\$82

Part Number	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price	
CM654S128A-150C	128MB PC150	16X64 CAS2	7.7NS	\$21
CM734S128-123	128MB PC133	16X72	7.5NS	\$23
CM654S256-BX2	256MB	32X64	8NS	\$36
CM654S256-133C2	256MB PC133	32X64 CAS2	7.5NS	\$36
CM654S256-150C2	256MB PC150	32X64 CAS2	7NS	\$36
CM742S256-133	256MB PC133	32X72	7.5NS	\$44
CM742S256-BX2	256MB	32X72	8NS	\$44
CM744S512-133	512MB PC133	64X72	7.5NS	\$249
CM744S1024-133	1024MB PC133	128X72	7.5NS	\$309

M616DR128-800	128MB	.RDRAM	800MHZ	\$52
M618DR128-800	128MB	.RDRAM	800MHZ	\$53
M616DR256-800	256MB	.RDRAM	800MHZ	\$102
M618DR256-800	256MB	.RDRAM	800MHZ	\$105
M618DR512-800	512MB	.RDRAM	800MHZ	\$327

SAMSUNG MEMORY			
564MB100	64MB	8X64 (SDRAM)	8NS \$13
564MB133	64MB PC133	8X64 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$13
5128MB100	128MB	16X64 (SDRAM)	8NS \$15
5128MB133	128MB PC133	16X64 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$15
5256MB100	256MB PC100	32X64 (SDRAM)	8NS \$23
5256MB133	256MB PC133	32X64 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$23
5256REG133	256MB PC133	32X72 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$33
5512MB133	512MB PC133	64X64 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$43
5512MB133REG	512MB PC133	64X64 (SDRAM)	7.5NS \$67
5128MB266	128MB PC2100	16X64 (DDR)	2.5CAS \$24
5256MB266	256MB PC2100	32X64 (DDR)	2.5CAS \$31
5512MB266	512MB PC2100	64X64 (DDR)	2.5CAS \$92
5128MB800	128MB PC800	RDRAW	\$46
5256MB800	256MB PC800	RDRAW	\$90

64SD128-2100	128MB		16X64 DDR	266MHZ	\$27
64SD128-2400C2	128MB (CAS 2)		16X64 DDR	300MHZ	\$32
64SD128-2100C2	128MB (CAS 2)		16X64 DDR	266MHZ	\$36
72SD128-2100	128MB		16X72 DDR	266MHZ	\$31
64SD256-2100	256MB		32X64 DDR	266MHZ	\$44
64SD256-2400C2	256MB (CAS 2)		16X64 DDR	300MHZ	\$54
72SD256-2100	256MB		32X72 DDR	266MHZ	\$58
72SD256R-2100	256MB (REG)		32X72 DDR	266MHZ	\$59
72SD512-2100	512MB (REG)		64X72 DDR	266MHZ	\$144

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If your little angel aspires to maraud with the big boys, give him a kick-start with the Rider Children's Motorcycle from The Sharper Image (www.sharperimage.com). No, we're not making this up. The battery-powered hog, which achieves speeds up to 3 miles per hour, comes with training wheels. The cost? \$349.95, hospital bills not included.



STOCKING STUFFERS

It's that time of year again. Don't know what to give? Consult our handy guide, based on your true worth: income level.

Income level	Poor	Solid Middle-Class	Rolling in It
Gift	Custom-made mix CD of songs downloaded from the Internet	Civilization III, the latest entry in the strategy-gaming franchise (\$44.99)	Latte and Macaron, the new robopups from Sony's AIBO line (\$850 each)
Fun uses!	Recipients can play it whenever you visit, instead of the annoying stuff they usually listen to	Perfect for kids and teens, who will enjoy it silently in a room by themselves for hours on end	Turn them against each other; frighten living pets
What the gift says about you	"I care enough to make you a personalized gift."	"Please enjoy this game, with its crack-like addictiveness, in a manner that doesn't involve me!"	"I may be uncreative, but I care enough to give one of the hottest gifts of the last two years."
What it says about the recipient	"Nothing says 'I love you' like copyright violation."	"You're smart, obsessive, and should really get outside more."	"You seem to need more companionship than others are willing to provide."

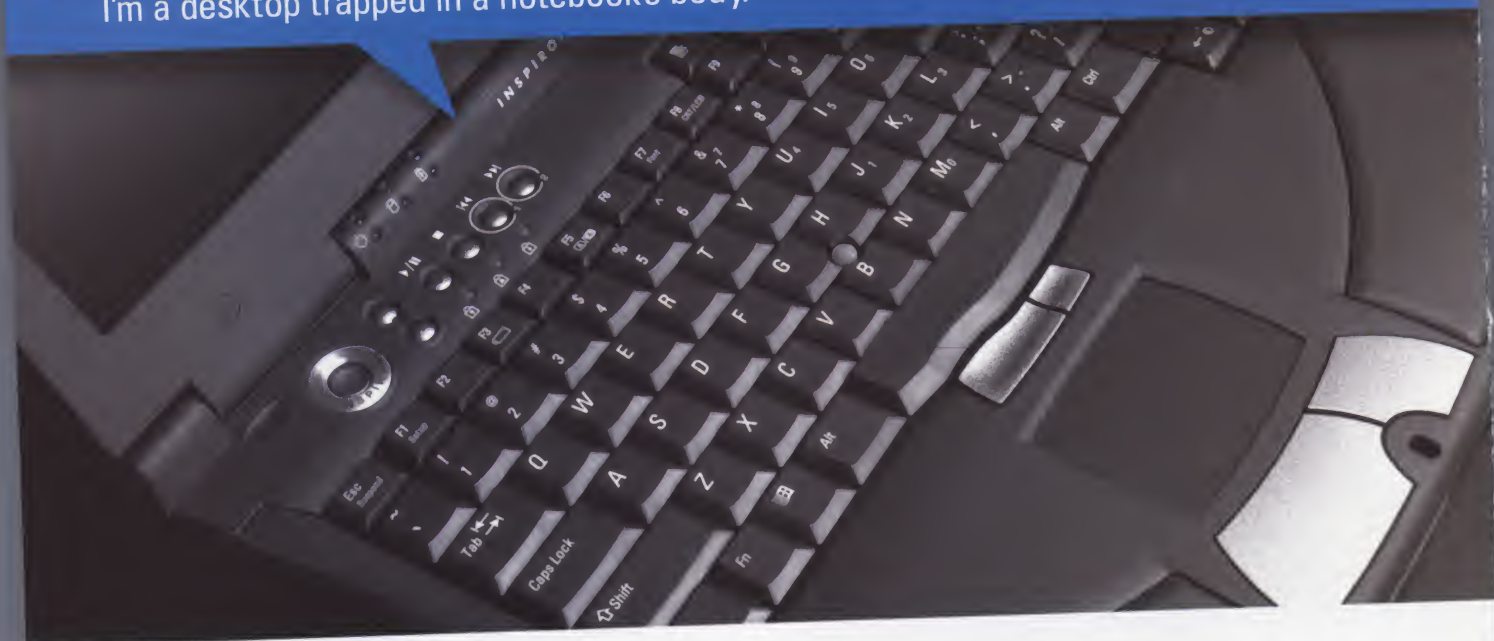
LUMPS OF COAL

What's on your wish list this year? We bet you won't be asking Santa for any of the following:

- 1 An exciting, interactive rain check for Xbox
- 2 Remington NE-3 Precision Wet/Dry Rotary Nose & Ear Trimmer (used item available at Amazon.com)
- 3 Incipio PDA Zip Case (Soft Giraffe Print)
- 4 The Sony e-Villa, Compaq iPaq IA-1, 3Com Audrey—any Internet appliance, really
- 5 Lectrix 0301 Daisy the Cow Vac
- 6 One of those cool MP3 player/digital camera/electric toothbrush combination devices
- 7 Lego Creator Harry Potter software—build scenes from the movie using *virtual* Lego bricks! And you can download *even more* virtual Lego bricks!
- 8 Shop With Me Barbie Cash Register, which features four realistic ways to buy noodles, yogurt, and toilet paper
- 9 Microsoft Windows Me for Dummies
- 10 \$1 million—in Flooz!



I'm a desktop trapped in a notebook's body.



Dell | Small Business

Inspiron™ 8100 Notebook

NEW Pinnacle of Performance Notebook

- NEW Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1.2GHz-M
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- 128MB PC133 SDRAM
- 10GB* Ultra ATA HD
- Fixed Internal 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
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- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery w/ExpressCharge™ Technology
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Business Loan: **\$60/mo.**, 48 mos.¹¹
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- Fixed Internal CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive, add \$299
- MS® Windows® XP Professional, add \$79



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- Harman Kardon® HK-195 Speakers
- 56K* PCI Data Fax Modem for Windows®
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- 16X DVD-ROM Drive
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- 16X DVD-ROM Drive
- 16X/10X/40X CD-RW Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator®
- Turtle Beach Santa Cruz DSP Sound Card
- Harman Kardon® HK-395 Speakers
- 56K* PCI Telephony Modem for Windows®
- MS® Windows® XP Home Edition; MS® Works Suite 2001
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- SoundBlaster® Compatible Sound With Wavetable
- 4-Cell Li-Ion Battery
- Internal 56K* Fax Modem
- MS® Windows® XP Home Edition; MS® Works Suite 2001
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- SoundBlaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 4-Cell Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology
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- 32MB DDR NVIDIA® GeForce2 Go® 4X AGP 3D Video
- SoundBlaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology
- Internal 56K* Fax Modem
- MS® Windows® XP Home Edition; MS® Works Suite 2001
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- 128MB SDRAM
- 20GB* (7200 RPM) Ultra ATA HD
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- NEW 64MB NVIDIA® GeForce2 MX Graphics
- SB Live! Digital Sound; HK-195 Speakers
- PCI Data Fax Modem; 10/100 PCI NIC
- MS® Windows® XP Home, MS® Works Suite 2001
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service†

\$999

Business Loan: \$27/mo., 48 mos.†



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Recommended upgrades:

- 15" 1503 FP Flat Panel, add \$340
- MS® Windows® XP Professional, add \$99



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- 20GB* Value HD
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- Integrated Intel 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- MS® Windows® 98; MS® Works Suite 6.0
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr Mail-In Service

\$599 Business Loan: **\$16/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-591105

Recommended upgrades:

- APC Pro8T2 Surge Protector, add \$39
- Lexmark Z53 Printer, add \$129

Dimension™ 4300 Desktop

NEW Advanced Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.6GHz
- 128MB SDRAM
- 20GB* (7200 RPM) Ultra ATA HD
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- 32MB NVIDIA® GeForce2 MX Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- Integrated Audio with SoundBlaster® Pro/16
- MS® Windows® XP Home; MS® Works Suite 2001
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service²⁾

\$699 Business Loan: **\$19/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-591006c

Recommended upgrades:

- Intel® Pro 100+ PCI NIC, add \$40
- MS® Windows® XP Professional, add \$99

OptiPlex™ GX240 Desktop

NEW Network-Optimized Managed PC

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.7GHz
- 128MB PC133 Non-ECC SDRAM
- 20GB* EIDE HD
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- 16MB ATI® Rage™ 128 Ultra 4X AGP Graphics Card
- 48X Max CD-ROM, Integrated AC97 Audio
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 NIC
- MS® Windows® XP Professional
- OptiFrame™ Small Desktop Tool-less Chassis
- 3-Yr NBD On-Site Service³⁾

\$999 Business Loan: **\$27/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
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Inspiron™ 2500 Notebook

Practical and Affordable Notebook

- Intel® Celeron® Processor at 800MHz
- 12.1" SVGA TFT Display
- 64MB Shared® PC100 SDRAM
- 10GB* Ultra ATA HD
- Fixed Internal 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
- Intel® Integrated 3D® AGP Video
- Internal Mini-PCI 56K Capable® Modem
- MS® Windows® Me; MS® Works Suite
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr Mail-In Service, 1-Yr Phone Tech Support

\$899 Business Loan: **\$24/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-891108

Recommended upgrades:

- 3-Yr Mail-In Service with Lifetime Phone Tech Support, add \$99
- APC® Notebook Surge Protector, add \$30

Inspiron™ 8100 Notebook

Pinnacle of Performance Notebook

- NEW Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1.2GHz-M
- 15" Ultra XGA TFT Display
- 128MB PC133 SDRAM
- 10GB* Ultra ATA HD
- Fixed Internal 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
- 32MB DDR 4X AGP NVIDIA® GeForce2 Go® 3D Video
- 8-Cell Li-Ion Battery w/ExpressCharge™ Technology
- Internal Mini-PCI 56K Capable® Modem
- MS® Windows® XP Home; MS® Office XP Small Business
- 1-Yr Ltd Warranty; 1-Yr Mail-In Service, 1-Yr Phone Tech Support

\$2249 Business Loan: **\$60/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-891122

Recommended upgrade:

- Fixed Internal CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive, add \$299

Latitude™ C500 Notebook

Wireless-Ready Value Notebook

- Intel® Celeron® Processor at 800MHz
- 12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
- 64MB PC100 SDRAM; 10GB* Ultra ATA HD
- 8MB ATI® Mobility™ 128 Video, 2X AGP
- MS® Windows® 98, Second Edition
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM/Floppy Drive
- Internal Mini-PCI 56K Capable® SoftModem
- 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service⁴⁾

\$1249 Business Loan: **\$33/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-791112

Recommended upgrade:

- 14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display, add \$50



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NEW Basic Server at Our Lowest Price

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- 128MB 133MHz ECC SDRAM
- 20GB* (7200 RPM) IDE HD
- Embedded Intel® 10/100 NIC
- 48X Max IDE CD-ROM
- 1-Yr NBD On-Site Service⁵⁾; 1-Yr Parts⁶⁾
- 7x24 Phone Tech Support

\$629 Business Loan: **\$17/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-291106

Recommended upgrades:

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1.0GHz, add \$200
- Same-Day 4-Hour (5x10) On-Site Service,⁹⁾ add \$349

PowerEdge™ 1400SC Server

Small Business Value Server

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 933MHz
- Dual Processor Capable
- 128MB 133MHz ECC SDRAM
- 18GB* (10K RPM) Ultra3(Ultra 160) SCSI HD
- Embedded Intel® 10/100 NIC
- Embedded Ultra3 (Ultra 160) SCSI Controller
- 1-Yr NBD Bronze On-Site Service⁷⁾; 1-Yr Parts⁸⁾
- 7x24 Phone Tech Support

\$799 Business Loan: **\$21/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
E-VALUE Code:
00471-291107

Recommended upgrade:

- MS® Windows® 2000 Server, add \$799

Precision™ 340 Workstation

NEW Advanced Performance Workstation

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.7GHz
- 128MB PC800 ECC RDRAM
- 20GB* (7200 RPM) ATA/100 HD
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\$1099 Business Loan: **\$29/mo.**, 48 mos.¹⁾
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